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**A HEALTH UNTO  
HIS MAJESTY**

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**JUSTIN HUNTLY  
McCARTHY**



# **A HEALTH UNTO HIS MAJESTY**

BY  
**JUSTIN HUNTLY McCARTHY**

AUTHOR OF "IF I WERE KING," ETC.



**HODDER & STOUGHTON**  
**NEW YORK**  
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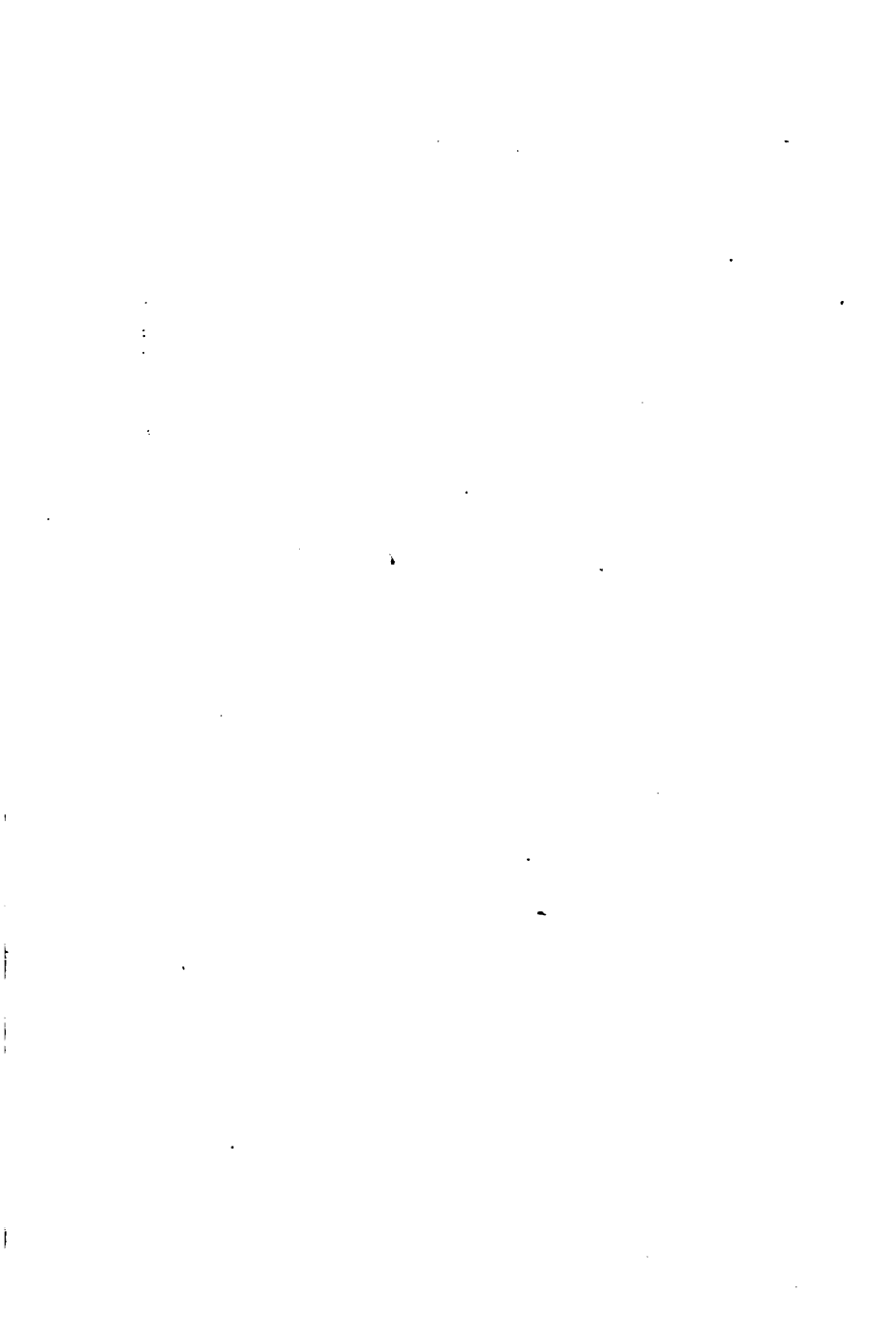
To

S. McC.

Here is a tale of Charles the debonair  
Untraced by Clarendon's monumental pen:  
But there be dreams as well as lives of men  
And vagabond fancy finds the dream more fair  
In which the crown on Charles's sable hair  
Was by a woman's fingers placed. Amen.  
And if this did not happen there and then  
I swear it should have happened then and there.  
A health unto His Majesty the King,  
Whose life was all adventure. Long ago  
The merry Stuart minstrels ceased to sing,  
The fated Stuart roses ceased to blow;  
But in romance Young Rowley has his fling,  
And to his name the ruddy bumpers flow.

J. H. McC.

XXXI., III., MCMXII.



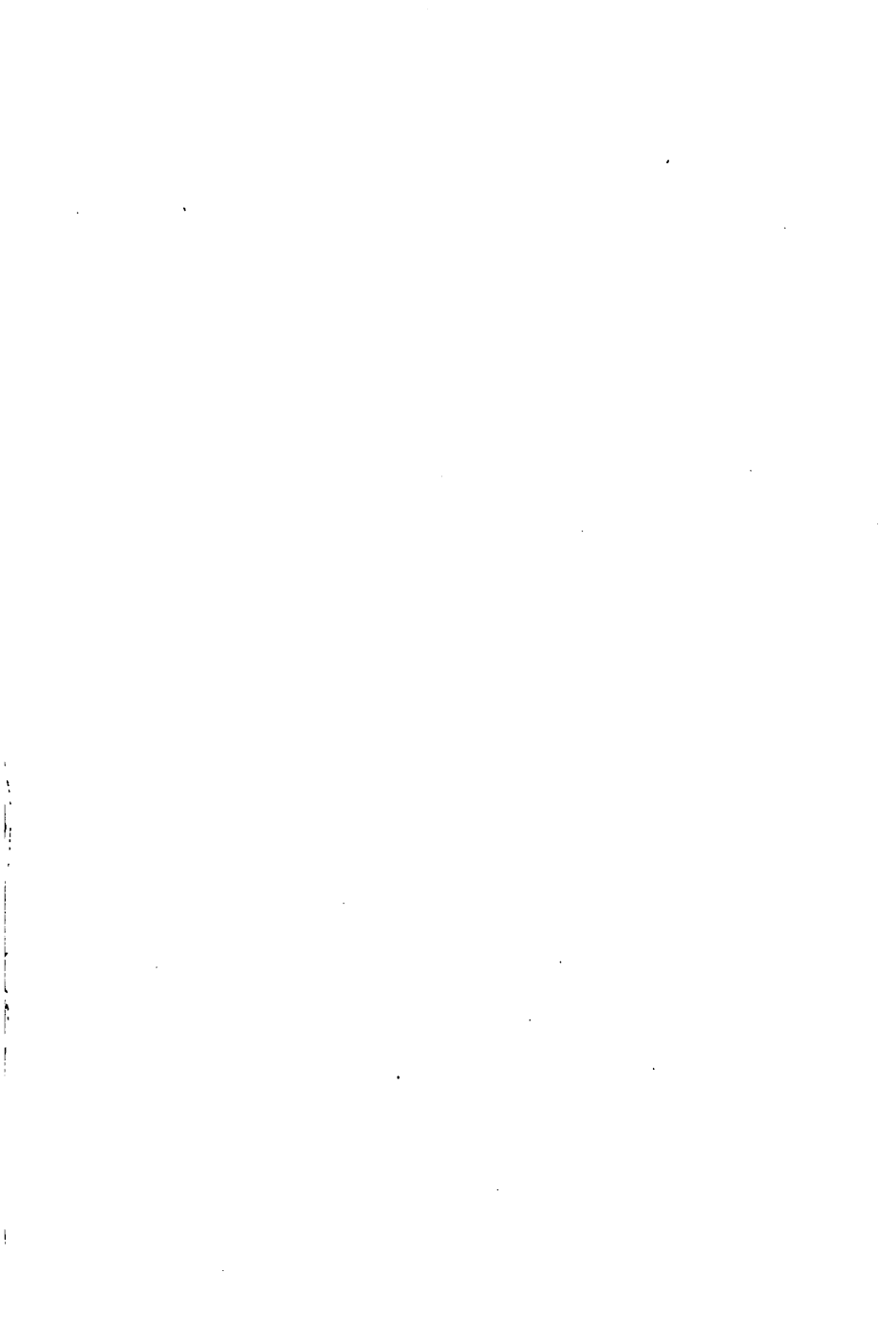
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**A HEALTH UNTO HIS MAJESTY**



# A HEALTH UNTO HIS MAJESTY

## CHAPTER I

### A ROYAL COURT

A NUMBER of men were gathered together in a great, gaunt room that was high up in a high house. The room had once, no doubt, been a well-kept, well-furnished apartment, whose tenant might regard himself and his surroundings with satisfaction and respect. Now, plainly, it had fallen upon evil days. It was ragged and shabby, almost to the limit of possible raggedness and shabbiness. Neglect had strengthened the hand of time in the work of destruction. Its wainscoted walls were stained; its panels were cracked; the pattern of the painted ceiling was invisible from grime, and most of its surface was black as night with the unclean smoke of many fires and candles. Such furniture as the room contained — and it contained but little — was in keeping with the poverty-stricken aspect of the place. The chairs were rickety, the tables rough and clumsy, more suited to a kitchen than a living-room; the solitary settee had lost a leg, and was propped up by a billet of wood. Perhaps the dilapidation of the room was accentuated by the fact that it contained some objects that were conspic-

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uously in contrast with its general dreariness. There was a chair that was shaped something like a throne, a chair that was solidly built and stable. It still carried traces of gilding, and though its velvet upholstery was worn and faded, it showed newer than most of its surroundings. There was a well-painted picture upon the walls of a handsome man with a melancholy face, who had long brown hair and a pointed brown beard, and wore a blue ribbon and the George. The picture was framed in a costly frame whose richness seemed incongruous amid so much squalor, and on the lowest bevel of the setting was cut the word "Remember." There was a sword, too, lying on a side-table beneath the picture, whose hilt was set with brilliants of price. These few signs of luxury, like rings upon the fingers of one slain and naked, only deepened the dingy tragedy of the scene.

There was a great, open window at one side of the room that looked down from a somewhat dizzy height upon the water below, where great barges were always plying to and fro, and whence the guttural Flemish of those that conducted them rose attenuated almost to a whisper to the wretched garret. Over the roofs of the tall Flemish houses, those that lived at that high elevation could get a good view of the canal stretching out to the distant sea. It was a view which those that tenanted the dreary place frequently regarded with wistful gaze, for beyond that distant sea lay all that meant life and hope and pleasure. They were exiles in a strange land, and the country of their birth lay far away beyond the horizon, far enough away, in fact, by mere stretch of geographical measurement, but farther away than the Fortunate Islands, as it seemed to those exiled



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spirits who would so gladly have crossed the sea, but could not.

These exiles, half a dozen in number, were in true accord with their environment. They were almost all clad in garments which evidently had once been fine and modish, but which the passage of time and long usage had reduced to a pitiable condition that suggested the wardrobe of a none too successful travelling tinker. Velvets, frayed to the cord; silks that were split and ripped and very ill-mended; laces that were torn beyond repair; these were the common attributes of the wearing apparel of the occupants of the chamber. One man alone, that sat apart from the others and was busy writing at a table, had somehow contrived to keep his person covered with a greater neatness; a youngish man, with a grave, quiet face and steady watchful eyes, a man in his appearance as unlike the other occupants of the room as in his garb.

These others all were, or affected to be, jolly fellows, bully Cavaliers, mighty swordsmen, mighty lovers, mighty trencher-men and flagon-men whenever meat and wine came their way. They were for ever shaking their long locks with laughter, for ever busy in the desperate pursuit of amusement under difficulties. Four of them were playing at cards, all with knitted brows and a great show of earnestness. One shabby gentleman that was seated in the window-seat, with a little ink-horn by his side, was writing in a little paper book. The gentleman seemed to be much amused by what he was writing, for ever and anon he would pause in his task to chuckle over his work, and to slap his thigh caressingly with the hand that carried the quill.

The merriment of the company, such as it was, was

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wholly unsupported by any of the usual aids of jollity. There was no sign of wine in that squalid room; there was no sign of meat; there was no sign, indeed, of anything whatever to eat or drink. Never, perhaps, since the historic Muse found herself called upon to deal with sovereigns and subjects, had apartment seemed less like the dwelling-place of a king or its occupants less like the members of a royal court. Yet the dismal, pinched, untidy room was a king's presence-chamber, and those shabby rascals, who gambled and laughed and scribbled, were the courtiers of a king.

The king was none other than His Majesty Charles the Second, King of England by the grace of God, but for the time being very hopelessly and helplessly in exile from the dominions that had never yet been his. Charles's fortunes at this time seemed to be at their very lowest ebb. The years of exile appeared to be culminating in complete ruin. He had drifted further and further out of the favour of those princes and potentates whose aid he sought or whose countenance he desired. France, through its minister, looked upon him with an increasing coldness, and the England that accepted the Commonwealth had, as long as the first Protectorate had endured, commanded an increasing hold upon the political affections or, at least, the political respect of the European powers. Such money as Charles was supposed to receive from those that consented, reluctantly and grudgingly, to be his paymasters was doled out with a niggard hand, and was frequently in arrears, and at best it barely sufficed to keep Charles and his companions in the merest necessities of food, raiment and lodging. Nor was there now any cheerful prospect of the darkness lifting. The Royalist hopes that had risen

## A ROYAL COURT

high at the death of Cromwell had faded again with the nominal continuation of the Protectorate, and the practical government of the country by generals, who, if hostile to each other, seemed to be still more hostile to the Stuart cause. Charles was no welcome guest in any capital, no favourite at any court. Thus it came about that in the spring of the year 1660, he found himself a beggar and a king of beggars in the dull little Dutch town, found that now his kingdom was reduced to the pitiful limits of a grisly run of rooms on the summit of a Dutch house, while the half dozen or so of ill-dressed devil-may-cares that sprawled at ease in the naked, hungry chamber served to parody ironically the pompous retinue of a monarch.

If the men that made up that muster and apologized grotesquely enough for a court had with one exception a general resemblance, they differed as greatly one from another in face and figure as was possible for five ordinary men. Each of the assembled gentlemen resembled his fellows, always allowing for the exception, in the shabbiness of his habit and the traces of debauchery which his face betrayed. It was plain that they were every man jack of them, with the one exception, liberal lovers of the potent pleasures of life. Love of woman flaunted in their eyes, love of wine flamed in their cheeks; their mouths seemed greedy of red kisses and red meat. The epitaph which Sardanapalus made for himself, the epitaph which Aristotle declared to be worthy of a hog: "Eat, drink and love: all else is worthless," represented pithily and truthfully the creed of these roisterers. Such, indeed, was, in a measure, the censure of the men themselves and of their friends; such was, without measure, the censure of their enemies. Yet neither their

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friends nor their enemies nor the men themselves were rightly able to sit in judgment. To the Puritans those Cavalier qualities, which manifested themselves in the love of women and the love of wine, seemed in their brisk and lively sensuality wholly abhorrent and condemnable. What the Puritans did not, and perhaps could not, appreciate was, in the first place, that those elements of evil which they denounced in the Cavalier composition were accompanied by rare and splendid virtues, by a magnificent courage, an uncompromising loyalty. In the second place, the excesses of the Cavaliers were largely goaded into assertion by the excesses of the Puritans. The men who stood for the warmth and colour of life were exasperated into defiant assertion of their creed by men whose ambition it seemed to be, at least to Cavalier eyes, to blot out all warmth and colour from the world.

Undoubtedly the men that were sharing the crumbs of Charles Stuart's fortunes at Breda were Cavaliers of the Cavaliers, extravagant, excessive, persistent in their impenitent worldliness. On them, therefore, the hardships that had befallen weighed heavily. A professional anchorite might have found the privations of that pinched and withered court excessive. To men whose ideals of happiness were the wine-pots and the flesh-pots and the flesh, the conditions of their life were ironically cruel, and their ruddy jowls were drawn with the sour lines of physical and mental protest against the hardness of their case.

He that niched in the window-seat and scribbled so briskly, was Sir John Dawlish. Of all the companions of the exiled king, he was reputed to be the handsomest man. The judgment had been disputed by many men,

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who were also among the companions of the exiled king; it had also been disputed by some women. As these, however, were generally either women whom Dawlish had ignored or had wearied of after knowledge, their testimony was regarded as tainted in the Courts of Love. It certainly could scarcely be questioned that he was the comeliest personage among the men in that ill-favoured room, the lees and dregs of poor Charles's cup, with the sole exception of the man that sat apart and that might have been declared by some to wear the fairer face. John Dawlish was a Cavalier of Cavaliers; at least he would have been so estimated by those to whom the Cavaliers were hateful. He was invincibly convinced that a man's business in life was to amuse himself as much as he could. By amusement he meant loving inordinately, drinking inordinately and gaming inordinately. He was brave, of course. Such a man took bravery for granted in his scheme of the world, and Sir John Dawlish's bravery was as reckless as the bravery of Prince Rupert. More could not be said, for Rupert might be rivalled, but Rupert was unsurpassable. Dawlish was something of a scholar and something of a wit, and he loved to string rhymes.

The quartette that sat at the table and gambled, as children might gamble, so poor were the stakes for which they could afford to play, were my lord Garlinge, Master Thomas Pippet, George Welcombe, who was Lord Ettington, and Harry Kingfisher. Linked by the kinship of common misfortune, they clung to the crownless king because they had nothing else left to cling to. They could fight and dice and drab and drink, and that represented the sum of their capacities. To give them their due they were always ready to fight for their king, but

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there had been no chance of fighting for this many a year, so if they still clung to his skirts it was in the desperate hope that something might still happen which would allow them to dice and drab and drink in untroubled security for the rest of their days. My lord Garlinge was burly of body and something turgid of mind; he was a Cavalier, as it were, with the polish hopelessly worn off. Master Pippet was created by a humorous nature to be Groom of the Chamber to a rich and dissolute king. His royal master had all the dissoluteness desired, but the riches were dismally to seek. Therefore Master Pippet's jolly face was furrowed, therefore Master Pippet's honest paunch was hollow, therefore Master Pippet, that should always have been jocund, was a prey to yellow melancholy. He was as pleased to play pimp and pander as other men were, to enjoy the wares that such officials procure; he was never meant for poverty and the virtue that such poverty compels. He was, therefore, as miserable as his lack of imagination permitted.

George Welcombe was of a composition as commonplace, if more honourable. He was as unimaginative as Pippet, but he was tuned to a higher key. No prince would ever dream of employing him in intrigue, of making him an usher at backstairs. He was a straightforward, simple-minded, somewhat sullen-tempered fellow that took it for granted that the world ought always to go well with a good-looking and well-fashioned young man that was by right Lord Ettington, and he was staggered to exasperation at finding his convictions challenged by cold fact.

The last of the party was Jack Kingfisher, the self-appointed merryman of the royal household. He made

## A ROYAL COURT

it his business — or at least he had made it his business, up to now — to be always in good spirits, always ready to appreciate the humorous features of existence, always brisk to keep a sharp look-out, with an eye roguishly cocked, for the inevitable silver lining. Hostile tongues might and did dub him client, parasite and toady. If he were all these things, he was, or had been, always an amusing companion. But the salt of the sousing waves of misfortune had soured him as it had soured his fellow gamesters. He still aped the good fellow, but his ostentatious mirth had grown a little grey, and sounded a trifle hollow. He adored his master, but he could not help feeling galled to find that his master's high spirits proved in adversity so much more sterling than his own.

The man that made the exception to this gallery of bedraggled gallants, the man of neater apparel and trimmer carriage that sat at the writing-table, was Mr. Richard Challis, the King's secretary. This Challis was a man of a fine presence and of a good height, although he did not equal the inches of his King. His finely-featured countenance was generally characterized by a calm that may have been the result of purpose, but that certainly seemed natural to the man. He was of a pale complexion, which made his dark eyes seem darker, and all his actions were characterized by a certain deliberate gravity that was curiously in contrast with the bearing of his companions. The gravity of his carriage was emphasized by the gravity of his garments. While the Cavaliers that formed the grotesque court of the King in exile would have outrivalled the peacock had their purses permitted, Challis dressed by preference in raiment of restrained hue and chastened fashion. In an assembly of Puritans he would have passed for a Puritan well enough; in the

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company of Cavaliers the Puritanism of his garb stood out in strong contrast to their tarnished finery.

Yet the Puritanism of his habit, for all that it caught attention in the company he kept, would have seemed to a true Puritan to have erred a little on the side of an over precision that it might be hard to distinguish from true foppishness. It was not that Master Challis permitted himself any special richness of texture or rareness of fabric in the demure garments that he was pleased to favour. To have made it evident that his clothes, for all their sad colouring, were costly would have been not merely to assert a superiority of pocket over his fellow-courtiers, but indeed to put a flagrant affront upon a pauper King. Therefore Master Challis's clothes were of the simplest kind, neither challenging comment by an extravagance of simplicity nor affecting to conceal with elaborate ostentation the ownership of an opulent wardrobe. It was rather in the exquisite neatness with which Master Challis kept himself and his attire that he set himself tranquilly, if decisively, apart from his companions. He would have described the stuff that covered him as threadbare, though no one else would have been likely so to call it either on first glance or later study, but if it were indeed well-worn it was yet better kept, loyally folded on putting off, loyally brushed ere putting on. Even as his coat and breeches were stainless and rentless, never a button missing nor a point awry, so was his linen fine of web and flawlessly white, and the lace at his throat and wrists was never ragged. He seemed to be curiously aloof from the down-at-heels, slatternly gentlemen whose lot he shared; his cool restraint a contrast to their exuberance, his decorous apparel a contrast to the indifference



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or the defiance which permitted them to be foul. But if it pleased Challis to affect a sobriety of attire, he never willingly permitted it to be assumed that he was other than a Cavalier in tastes and habits. It seemed rather from a fastidious care of speech than from any regard for morality that his conversation was less adorned with the blasphemy and obscenities which enriched the vernacular of his companions. What he said and what he wrote he seemed to like to say well and to write well for the sake of the thing done, and he made it plain that he wished his vices to express themselves elegantly. Now, on this day and hour, he seemed wholly absorbed in his secretarial work. His swift quill skimmed over page upon page of paper; he made minutes, drafted letters for the royal signature, and arranged all the documents he had answered with methodical neatness and precision for purposes of prompt and easy reference. He seemed in his quiet steadiness of purpose and performance to suggest that his Majesty had at least one man that was wholly devoted to his interests. Others might gamble, others might amuse themselves; Challis could, would, and did write.

For a time the only sounds that stirred the stillness of the room were made by the falling of the cards upon the table, the occasional ejaculations of the players, the rapid scratching of Challis's pen over the paper and an occasional chuckle from Dawlish ensconced in the window. All the men seemed keenly in earnest over their occupations. The gamblers studied and cast their cards with faces that could not have been more intent if they had been playing for heaps of gold instead of for the pitiful stakes they were able to muster. Challis wrote steadily, covering sheet after sheet of paper with

## A HEALTH UNTO HIS MAJESTY

his fine flowing hand, and never lifting his head from his task. Dawlish smiled continually as he wooed his muse, but it was only at long intervals that he allowed the satisfaction that was so plainly visible upon his face to take audible expression. The misfortunes of the company might be signal, their privations keen, but for the moment all were lulled into oblivion of their cares, absorbed as they all were in their differing pursuits. For the moment, hunger and thirst and squalid housing and ruined raiment were forgotten, as the cards alternated, and the pen sped, and the rhymer juggled with his rhymes. But only for the moment. The seeming serenity was no better than the brief calm that sometimes rules between two storms.

Suddenly Pippet, with an air of triumph, banged a card upon the table and said triumphantly, "I think my king wins." Kingfisher and Welcombe pulled long faces. Garlinge retorted with an air of greater triumph. "Not when I play my ace," he said, and displayed his card. Pippet rose from the table in a rage. "Curse it," he cried, "the king never wins."

Nobody heeded him. Kingfisher and Welcombe were too much troubled by their own misluck, Garlinge too pleased with his victory. Dawlish at the back burst into a roar of laughter. Garlinge stared at him. "What the devil are you laughing at?" he asked. Dawlish, suddenly recalled by the voice to recollection of his companions, looked up for a moment from his work. "The best bit of bawdry I have ever penned," he answered. Pippet and his fellow victims forgot their losses in their curiosity. "Let's hear it," Pippet pleaded, and his pleading was supported eagerly by his friends. Dawlish shook his head with a solemn air and glanced

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significantly towards the table where Challis sat at his task.

"Master Secretary might be shocked," he said, with an affectation of gravity that sat comically upon his habitually mocking features.

Challis looked up from his work at the sound of his title. "Bless me, gentlemen," he said, and smiled as he spoke, "why should you feign me as a Puritan? I can be as gross a beast as any present, I thank God."

The Cavaliers laughed at the sally. Challis having made his point again immersed himself in his papers. Pippet, seemingly oblivious of his gamester's debt, was for gliding from the room, but Garlinge caught him by the arm. "Short accounts make long friends," he said briskly. By this time Pippet felt that the goddess that presided over games and gamesters was against him. He turned angrily upon Garlinge. "May you wither," he said fiercely. Garlinge only laughed. "Pay up and look pleasant," he demanded. Pippet, with a sour expression of countenance, ransacked his pockets and produced a handful of miscellaneous possessions. The Cavaliers, having no money to play with, had been gambling for such vivers as they could command. "There's some almonds and a dried plum and half a pippin," he enumerated, displaying his wealth.

Garlinge eyed the handful wryly. "Is that all you have about you?" he asked. Pippet nodded. "All the food I have about me," he declared. Then he added, as if pricked by conscience to literal truth, "I carry, indeed, a paper of cheese, but that is medicinal. I save it against colic and the wind."

Garlinge banged the table in protest. "A quibble, by the Lord!" he shouted. "What can be eaten is food,

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whatever its purpose, and I am so keen set I could chew a mustard plaster, if you were magnificent enough to possess one." Reluctantly Pippet produced a paper from his pocket, and unfolding it, disclosed a small and far from savoury looking morsel of cheese which he handed over to Garlinge with an air of great regret. "Damnable Harpy!" he cried, as Garlinge seized upon the fragment; then he turned, and, going to the window, put an arm round Dawlish's neck.

"Well, Jack," he asked, "what is this rhyme of yours?" The writer made room for his questioner on the window-bench. Pippet sat by Dawlish's side reading what Dawlish had written on the paper, while Garlinge occupied himself with munching the cheese. Welcombe shuffled the cards aimlessly and Kingfisher whistled a cheerful tune. Presently Pippet burst into a roar of laughter. "Glory, that's good," he cried, and patted Dawlish approvingly on the back. "I would I had the wit to think filth so briskly." Dawlish smiled contemptuously. "Poets are born, not made, my good Tom," he said. Then, seeing that the eyes of the three others were fixed upon him, he addressed himself to Garlinge. "If you give me a bit of your cheese, you shall share my wisdom," he promised. Garlinge looked at the poet dubiously. "You swear 'tis new matter?" he asked. Dawlish held up an affirming hand. "New as the new-born babe," he declared. "And quite as nasty," Pippet chuckled. Garlinge, Kingfisher and Welcombe made their way to the window-seat, and pushing Pippet out of the way, grouped themselves about Dawlish, read what he had written, and laughed. Welcombe applauded with meeting palms. Kingfisher turned an admiring gaze upon his friend. "Lord, I envy you,"

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he declared. "I can live foul and think foul, but damn me if I can write foul with any wit."

Dawlish grinned. "Homer and I knew how to write hymns," he said boastingly. He took a bite, as he spoke, at the cheese that Garlinge proffered him, made a grimace, and turned to Pippet. "Your cheese is musty, Pippet," he declared. Pippet nodded wisely. "Else I had eaten it long since." He sighed. Welcombe suggested, "Let us save it for Charles's supper." Dawlish protested loudly. "No, by God! If Charles cannot provide for us, let him fast like us." Challis, who had been steadily writing and paying no heed to the doings of his companions since he had made his protest against Dawlish's charge of Puritanism, lifted his head quickly at the mention of his master's name.

"Sirs," he said sharply, "remember that you are speaking of the King." In a flash Dawlish turned upon him with red rage on his face. "What if we are?" he asked hotly. "Our empty guts make us republican. One man's mouth is as good as another's." Kingfisher nodded assent. Welcombe sighed. Garlinge gave a despairing cry. "In God's name, why do we stay here?" he asked. Challis answered his question proudly. "The King's cause," he said, and stiffened himself in his seat. Welcombe shook his head. "There is no king, no cause, there is no hope." Again Challis reproved a doubter. "The hope of the blessed Restoration," he affirmed. Kingfisher burst into a bitter laugh. "La, la, la! There will never be a Restoration now. Our last chance was when old Noll died, and fool Richard found his father's chair too big for him. But though the country kicks Dickon out, it doesn't whistle Charlie in. They are content with their General Monk and their

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General Lambert, damn them! We are fools, I tell you, to sit starving here with Charles."

Challis eyed the speaker with steady disapproval. "I am as hungry as the rest of you," he protested boldly; "but the King is the King for me." Garlinge sneered at him. "You talk big," he said, "but you always look comfortable enough, pretty simpleton." Instantly Challis turned from ice to fire. "No simpleton, my lord Garlinge," he said hotly, "but a loyal gentleman that will fight you as you please for the King's honour." Garlinge mocked him, emitting a Puritan snuffle, at which Kingfisher and Welcombe laughed. "Yea verily," he whined, "shall we prattle of Zion and the high places, praise-God Challis."

Challis rose from the table without leaving his seat. He looked sternly at the laughing Cavaliers, and his pale face was tinged with colour. "None of you dare quarrel with me," he said quietly, "for you know I am the best sword at the King's side." Garlinge, infuriated by Challis's manner, would have drawn if Kingfisher and Welcombe had not stayed him. Dawlish thought it time to interfere in the brawl. "Jehovah, why this heat?" he asked, looking from angry Garlinge struggling with his friends to angry Challis, erect at his paper-strewn table. Challis answered him with dignity. "Because it makes me dead sick to hear you scoff at our sovereign lord. If we suffer a little, does not he suffer an infinity? Yet who but he to be merry though his fortunes be black as a pall-bearer's mantle. What is the King? Everything. What are you? Nothing."

As he spoke, Challis snapped his fingers contemptuously at his companions. Garlinge, who had shaken himself free of Kingfisher and Welcombe, turned his

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back sulkily. Dawlish laughed again. "If Master Monk in England could hear such fustian, he would turn kingsman," he declared. Kingfisher caught up the fancy and went on. "And offer the crown on a cushion, saying in a still, small voice—" Pippet continued, squeaking comically in a thin, whistling tone. "For God's love, Charles Stuart," he entreated, "return to your loving subjects."

Challis scorned them. "You jeer at your King," he said, "because he is out-at-elbows, out at heel, out at pocket. Your stomachs are too dainty to bear pangs he daffs aside with a smile. But I find him liker a king in his rags and tatters than ye that have milk livers, and whine at a tightened belt."

He paused for a moment as if listening to some sound without, then he cried in a louder voice, "God save Charles Stuart. God save the King."

Dawlish smiled. "You talk loyal so loudly," he averred, "for you hear his foot on the stairs."

It was indeed true that, while Challis had been speaking, the sound of footsteps became audible in the corridor, footsteps whose fall was familiar to all in the room. Yet those footsteps seemed to move more slowly than was their wont from the stairway to the door.

## CHAPTER II

### THE WHY AND WHEREFORE

**W**HILE that foot is sounding on the stair, and while those half a dozen inflammable gentlemen are waiting for the door to open, the merry Muse of History, to whom Time is of no moment and all Eternity no more than a magnified Glass through which the sands are ceaselessly running and never ceasing to run, the merry Muse of History is wishful to say a few words. The baggage knows well enough that my Lord Clarendon has overlooked that episode in the life of his gracious Majesty King Charles the Second of blessed memory, which is here recorded. Some portion of it, perhaps, indeed, all of it, he never knew. It seemed very vital and essential to those few that took part in it, but it lasted no more than a little breathing-space, and could easily be ignored by a serious historian who happened to be ill at the time. The merry Muse of History delights in these obscure, whimsical interludes. To her grave and sedate sister—for there be two historical Muses—such intervals are negligible and, in consequence, neglected. But they are as ambrosia and nectar to her lively sister, who has for her pet-name the title of Mother Goose, and who does her best to deserve the nayword. If you will be pleased, in this instance, to accept her as a kind of itinerant show-strumpet, poisoning her plump breasts on the top of a puppet-show, and



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pulling strings with nimble fingers while she smiles lies at her spectators, you will be in the better mood to appreciate and accept her argument. For the jolly Ronion is going to tell you, if you consent to hear, what this little fellowship of distressed gentlefolk is doing on this day of seventeenth century spring in that room of grim, pinched, and piteous misery that lies so unsnugly under the roof of that high, gaunt, handsome, rambling house in Breda. Breda, as you know very well—but the slut will have her way, and tell you all about it, if only to show that she is as wise as her betters—is a town in Brabant of Holland, that is as proud of her canals as Venice, as proud of her fortifications as Troy, as proud of her annals as Rome. It has been the battle ground of invading Spaniard and defending Fleming for the better part of a century, and has remained Flemish in the end, to the annoyance of painter Velazquez. At this particular instant in her career, she is as proud of her Burgomaster as of anything else, her good Burgomaster, Peter Yeoman, that is, indeed, by birth an Englishman, but who has lived so long in Breda and made himself so large a fortune there that the accident of his birth has been forgotten and forgiven, and he is ranked as right Dutch.

But she is not in the least proud of Master Peter Yeoman's latest lodgers in the old house that had once been his abode, until he shifted his quarters to a vaster and handsomer mansion in a more aristocratic quarter of the town. Master Peter Yeoman owns more houses in Breda than he can easily count without reference to catalogue, and he draws good rental from all of them, and from their occupants, save, indeed, these latest tenants of his. Breda does not know who they are, and

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she does not care. If she did know, it were not their identity that would concern her, but the ignobility of their wardrobe, the penury of their purses, the ironic incompatibility of their pretensions and their exchequer. When his Royal Highness Prince Charles Stuart, with his covey of hungry ravens, descended upon Breda, full of confidence in a mysterious summons to England, and empty of aught else, they found that Master Peter Yeoman was never the man to be gulled by fond illusions. Challis, that had hurried ahead from Brussels to prepare the way, had done his best, but his prodigality of phrases was fatally wedded to parsimony of pence, and the dusty run of rooms at the top of the tall house overlooking the canal was the best that the eloquence of the envoy could secure for King and Court. Master Peter listened with a resolutely Flemish ear to all that Challis had to say. Magniloquent appeals to his sense of patriotism had no effect in arousing an enthusiastic Royalist in the Englishman that was so cunningly masked by Master Peter's Dutch carriage and habit. On the contrary, such sense of nationality as could at all be kindled in him seemed to be of a republican humour, and easily warmed to admiration of the late Protector. As for General Monk, his admiration for that warrior was patently sincere, and the good Burgomaster glowed as he praised him. So Challis had to make the best of a bad business, and take with alacrity what Master Peter Yeoman grudgingly gave.

Many men in all ages have lusted to be kings, buoyed up in their desires with more or less reasonable hopes of gratifying their golden ambition, and have failed amazingly and painfully in their enterprise, and command the measure of pity that may be accorded to

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valiant failure. But, of those that reach after kingship, surely none is in more pitiable case than he whose fingers have seemed almost to close upon the crown and then have failed to close and hold. This was the position, in the early days of 1660, of the young man whose shabby followers waited on him, in ill-humour that was little better than mutiny, in that shabby room in Breda.

Here is the history of the young man's business in essential brevity. For eleven years after Charles the First died on the scaffold at Whitehall—to the ill-advised and afterwards regretted delight of Mr. Pepys—the King's son had been doing the best he could to regain his inheritance, and to reign an English king. He had tried to win his kingdom by force of arms, and had failed. Through all the iron pride of Cromwell's Protectorate, the young man had hoped and schemed and dreamed, and every passing year found his hopes less lively, his schemes less promising, his dreams less inspiring. He was condemned to a parody of royal state sustained by the meagre and grudging bounty of foreign princes that grew easily wearied of the young man and of his ambitions and pretences that seemed yearly more preposterous.

Then suddenly Oliver Cromwell died and Richard Cromwell sat for a little while in the Chair of State, and was shaken from it by a force and turbulence he was powerless to control, and in the consequent confusion the hungry young man believed that he saw his chance at last, and his belief was shared by all his hungry followers, at home and abroad.

England seemed suddenly to have become the battlefield of two hostile generals, General Monk and General

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Lambert, that faced each other like battling bulls. To the observer from afar, unversed in the intricacies of English political and religious differences, it would naturally seem that General Monk of the one part, and General Lambert of the other, were as like as two peas, and that if they represented opposing factions, it could only be because each wished to be at the head of affairs in a country suddenly distracted by the loss of its strong man. And, roughly speaking, the observer from afar would have been in the right of it. The differences between Monk and Lambert were practically insignificant so long as the Commonwealth was dominated by the masterful genius of Cromwell. But the magnificent and more than royal obsequies of the Lord Protector were scarcely over — those obsequies that helped to beggar son Richard, unexpectedly called upon to pay for them — the last of the hundreds of wax candles had scarcely burned to the socket, before it became plain that, where a strong man had passed away and left a weak man to wear his shoes, there was a fighting chance for another strong man to grasp the fallen baton that was almost a fallen sceptre.

To the watching exiles it was obvious that Monk believed himself to be such a strong man; that Lambert believed himself to be such a strong man. The antagonists seemed fairly matched, and the thought kindled the joy-fire in loyal hearts. The Stuart cause in England might not be strong enough to strive against a single man with the power of an united Puritan party massed behind him, but once that Puritan party was divided it might very well hope to turn the scale for one side or the other by coming to terms with the likeliest of the combatants.

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But the hopes thus blithely fired were not to be lightly gratified. While the contending pretenders seemed to be fairly equally matched, the Cavaliers were right in thinking that they might sell their good swords for the price of a crown. Negotiations, difficult, delicate, and dexterous, were broached with the man that seemed the more hopeful to the negotiators. The man chosen was Monk, for Lambert's hostility to a possible Restoration was made painfully evident by the briskness and completeness with which he blotted out the Royalist rising under my lord Derby and Sir George Booth. Monk met advances with inscrutability; those that knew him best believed that he was tempted to strengthen his hand against Lambert with court cards; he gave guarded, cryptic answers, which those that heard them endeavoured to twist into Delphic sibyllations of good augury.

All seemed at the best for the gentlemen in exile, when suddenly all went to the worst again. Here was Lambert marching from the south to obliterate Monk. Here was Monk marching from the north to obliterate Lambert. Lambert was fiercely the King's enemy; Monk perhaps secretly the King's friend. A word from Monk, and all that served the Stuart cause would rally to his side. But before that word could be spoken, if it had ever been Monk's intention to speak it, the situation changed with the swiftness of a dream. Lambert's army melted before Monk's advance like sugar in hot drink. In a twinkling it seemed clear that Monk could manage England single-hand, and in that instant the hopes of the Royalists withered. The foreign princes and ministers that had begun to find Charles's cause of sweet savour promptly discovered that it stank in their nostrils more furiously than before. To them, as

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to most men, it seemed clear that Monk could and would make himself King of England, in fact if not in name, and that the dream of a Restoration was dissipated for ever.

Such was roughly the way in which affairs in England showed themselves to the poor distracted Cavaliers that shivered in the winter of exile. Such, indeed, was roughly the way in which those affairs presented themselves to the mind of the young man who wanted very hotly to be king and who now met the disappointment of his hopes with a mood whose natural rage and despair was tempered by a curious irony, by a curious sense of humour that would have adorned an old-time philosopher. It is probable that those affairs presented themselves to my Lord Clarendon in an aspect that, if less luridly coloured, was none the less ominous, in its dispassionate sobriety, to that politic brain. Certainly, as he recorded them thereafter for the benefit of successive ages, they do not show with such a crudeness of simplicity. But my Lord Clarendon (or rather, Sir Edward Hyde, as he then was) lay gravely ill at Brussels, in those hours of acrid disappointment, and such consolation as he could have offered by steady renewal of his old advice to play the waiting game was not available, and would probably have been found unpalatable.

So here was Charles at Breda, with the last handful of his adherents, all seemingly at their wits' end, and very certainly at the end of their meagre purses. The Jack-o'-lanthorn of a fallacious hope had hurried Charles to Breda. Something written, something whispered, had made him believe that it were well for him to pitch his ragged tent at Breda, had made him believe that there word would come for him from Monk to cross the

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seas and join forces, had made him think that there he was so much the nearer to the kingdom that at last was waiting for its king. Now, at Breda, he and his few, huddled together in sullen despondency, gnawed their nails and tightened their hunger-belts.

## CHAPTER III

### A KING OF SHREDS AND PATCHES

THE door opened, and a man entered the room, a tall man of his hands, with a black mass of hair and a swarthy face, a man whose six foot of height was now stooped under the weight of two enormous canvas bags, such as are used by millers. The man's bulk was built upon a big-boned frame that gave assurance of great physical strength; the man's head, thrust forward between the mouths of the sacks as they hung upon his shoulders, seemed small in proportion to the large body. The face of the man was still young, as it had a right to be, for he that carried it for a sign was no more than thirty years of age. It was patent to the first glance that the face was not merely a very handsome one, but one that had something about it most extraordinarily winning and appealing. It was the face of a man that must needs make many women love him and most men prove his friends. The meticulous might cavil to hear it called beautiful and yet it had many elements of beauty in its composition, and few could behold it for the first time without being arrested by its rare comeliness. But its meadow of waning youth was furrowed by lines too early and too deep for reason. That heavy drag at the nasal side of the cheeks told a tale of many physical tribulations, over-anxiety, over-pleasure, over-pain, over-scorn.



## A KING OF SHREDS AND PATCHES

Sorrow and lust and hunger, defeat and despair and shame, pride and desire and defiance, all had written their runes on that curious countenance. He had large, luminous deep-set eyes, eyes that were like the eyes of some dog that was at once faithful and cynical, a dog that loved mankind and yet that was able to laugh at it. Indeed, mirth appeared the dominant of the queer music written on the man's face, and the final harmony of all those warring notes seemed to be the pure spirit of laughter. A philosopher might feel, in beholding him, that he looked upon one that was thoroughly disillusioned, one that expected nothing from destiny, one that saw, pitilessly, the emptiness of life, and that made a jest of it by way of making the best of it. Even the wisest of philosophers might refrain from blaming the man for translating such thoughts into the scripture of his visage at the age of thirty, if the philosopher were acquainted with the history of the man.

The new-comer was as poorly dressed as any of the others whom he joined, but he carried his shabbiness with a kind of careless grace that it was not in the power of the others to emulate, and that compelled forgetfulness of the mean array through interest in the wearer.

All the Cavaliers saluted the new-comer, and such of them as were seated rose with some half-hearted show of respect as he entered, for this was the man who called himself, and was called by such as they, King of England, though the hostile over seas awarded him no better title than "The Son of the Man."

Charles eyed his followers curiously, as if he read and was diverted by their sullen thoughts; then he turned to his secretary with a smile on his dark face. "Why do you trumpet my name so lustily, honest Challis?"

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he asked. "I could hear your loyal bellow as I came along the passage. Faith, if all my friends thought as well of me and spoke as well of me, I should grow vain." Challis bowed low as the King spoke, his pale face flushing with pleasure at the praising words. But the speech which afforded so much satisfaction to Mr. Secretary only darkened the countenances and deepened the discontent of the other Cavaliers, who exchanged frowning glances.

"Your Majesty's friends are not all eloquent," Dawlish said sourly, voicing the discontent that was written on the faces of all his companions save Challis. Charles looked at him good-humoredly. "I know what you are going to say," he retorted, "deeds—not words! Well! we've been doing deeds. We have gone a-begging into the Land of Plenty and not come back empty-handed. Behold the grapes of Canaan!"

As Charles spoke he lowered his two burdens to the floor with an air of portentous solemnity and, opening the neck of one of the sacks, produced, in rapid succession, a large turkey which he tossed to Dawlish, a pickled tongue which he tossed to Garlinge, a noble ham which he tossed to Kingfisher, a brace of pullets which he tossed to Welcombe, and a great wheel of cheese which he tossed to Pippet. Each of the Cavaliers caught the provender addressed to him, and held it aloft in amazement, while Charles was busy producing, in quick succession, other provisions from the sacks.

"Am I in Elysium?" Dawlish asked.

"Nay, it is the land of Cocaigne," Kingfisher protested.

"Your Majesty is a horn of plenty," Garlinge cried.

"Oh, the brave belly-timber!" Welcombe sighed ap-

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provingly. Only Pippet, hugging his monstrous cheese, uttered a note of discontent. "Are we to eat dry?" he questioned querulously.

Charles shook his head vehemently, and his black mane tossed on his shoulders.

"Never think it," he cried. "The butt of the bag has the best of a cellar for burden."

As he spoke he produced from the end of the second bag some dozen or so of large bottles, which he laid upon the floor.

"We shall feast bravely this day," he said merrily, as he straightened himself with satisfaction at being free from the weight of his burden.

Dawlish applauded, his face as radiant as it had been wrathful. "God be praised for that same," he chanted. "Your Majesty's banquets of late are seldom satisfying to sharp-set maws."

"Zooks, man!" Charles cried, stretching his arms, as he spoke, in order to ease them after the strain of their load, "I'd fill you as full as a drum from morning till night if I did but enjoy my own again." Dawlish smiled at the King ironically.

"What a hopeful spirit your Majesty nurses," he said.

Challis instantly caught him up.

"His Majesty has every right to be hopeful," he protested. Charles spoke for himself gaily.

"Zooks! would you have me cast down because Monk and Lambert do not entreat me to England. All will come well, lads. Give care the go-by, and enjoy the vivers."

If Charles had good reason to believe that of late this remnant of his following was inclined to prove restive and to chafe at its courtly chains, at least, in

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this instant, he found himself the chief of a very dutiful obedience. If a royal command was seldom more blithely given, it was surely never more blithely obeyed. A covey of wolves could not have eyed more greedily the unexpected victuals that Charles had so gaily flaunted before their famished eyes, and it spoke sturdily in assurance of the elements of loyalty still abiding in those pinched anatomies that the fellowship of famine was able to wait upon the royal invitation to fall to, before flinging itself tooth and nail upon the glorious provisions. But that royal invitation once given, the famished gentlemen obeyed it with an alacrity that was little less than incredible. Singing and capering in their exultation as lustily as schoolboys summoned to a holiday feast, the five gentlemen—for even Challis condescended to share in their gaiety and aid their preparations—hastened to avail themselves of the goods that Charles had provided.

While the King flung himself into a chair and grinned at their avidity, the Cavaliers bustled to prepare for an immediate banquet. With broad sweeps of arms whose sleeves had long grown indifferent to dust, they freed their table from the objects that littered it. Cards fluttered to the floor, books flopped heavily after them, dice rattled and rolled unheeded. Such toys could be upgathered hereafter; for the moment they were no more than encumbrances to appetite. Charles had not finished laughing at his followers' zeal before they had spread on the board the victuals that were ready for instant eating, while those that needed cooking they providently stored away for future use. Then they produced from the neighbouring cupboard such small store of ware and cutlery as they possessed, and in another minute King and

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Court were seated and making a hearty meal together, the first hearty meal that they had shared for many a long day.

The bulk of the Cavaliers gorged valiantly, like the famished men they were, ramming huge fistfuls of victuals between their extended jaws and scarcely waiting to swallow the contents of their mouths before draining brimming goblets of wine. Only Charles and Challis ate daintily, the one because he did all things with a native grace, the other because he never seemed to feel the fierce appetite for food that possessed his companions.

For a while the company feasted in a most eloquent silence, but when the rage of thirst and hunger was sated, there came the time for talk.

"Where did you get all this treasure?" Garlinge muttered as he munched.

Charles leant back in his chair and laughed at some pleasant recollection.

"'Tis a tale so strange," he declared, "you will never credit it for all it happens to be true."

Five of his audience seemed incurious enough, but Challis, always watchful for the King's interests, looked eagerly at Charles.

"Pray relate, your Majesty," he requested. Charles cast an eye round the table at his gorging companions, and judging from their faces that they would not be unwilling to hear his story, he began:

"An hour ago I wandered to the market-place, in that humour which lures a faster to snuff the fumes of a cook-shop. My stomach was drawn, my throat was dry; there I waited and starved in the Land of Plenty. There were geese and turkeys, portly gallows-birds, rivers

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of fish, pyramids of cheeses, shields of brawn, rows of tongues, heaps of briskets, cases of vegetables, orchards of fruit, rivers of wine, kegs of brandy, barrels of schnapps, in a word everything strained appetite demands. There I stood in this Land of Goshen, racked with famine, and without a penny in my pocket."

"How, then, these victuals?" Garlinge questioned, between two bites of the better part of a dried salmon. Dawlish held up his hands in an affectation of virtuous horror. "Never say you stole them," he said, through a mouthful of brawn. Welcombe, Kingfisher, and Pip-pet were still too busy to speak, but they stared hard, with working faces, at their sovereign.

Charles took a draught of wine, and continued:

"I was gloating over a noble ham — the same you are gnawing, Pippet — when she that vended the blessed wares importuned me to buy. She was a commendable wench, a shade on the late side of thirty, broad of bow, broad of beam, and as clean as a new pin. Says I: 'I would buy very gladly, but I have not a penny to spend. But, Prettykin,' I added, seeing that the merry wench seemed vexed at my denial, 'I would buy all your store if you would but take kisses for coins.'"

The remark was so characteristic of Charles that it tickled the soothed tempers of the Cavaliers. They drank deep and laughed loud. Challis, who always showed most attention to the King, asked with an air of gentle deference, "What did she say?"

"She laughed," Charles answered. "She said it was a thousand pities so well-set a fellow — oh! she said it, I swear! — should be a lackpenny, but as for kisses, she could have all she wanted any day in the week, without having to swop pork for them with a stranger. Now

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this talk of kissing tickled my wits, for though you may not think it, I am fond of kissing, and an idea came into my head."

"Truly," Dawlish asked, impudently, with an offensive insinuation of doubt in his voice, but Charles took no offence. He appreciated the fact that his followers might, perhaps, be pardoned for their impatience and irritability, and he suffered his knowledge to make him gentle with their petulance and their spirit of mutiny. They had certainly known privations in his cause, and if he had suffered as well as they, he, at least, was the leader, he, at least, was the King. Those comrades of his were fretted men, soured by penury and famine. Their nerves were like the strings of some old musical instrument that had been over-played upon, till they sounded out-of-tune and responded harshly to pressure. Yet, Charles believed that in their hearts those comrades were wholly loyal to him, and if his high spirit could not but entertain some slight disdain for men who were unable to bear adversity stoutly, he was too good-natured to blame others very severely for lacking the fortitude that he had taught himself through years of trial to maintain. So he only answered their snarls with smiles and treated their bitterest gibes with the indifference of a man that plays with a puppy and lets it mumble unchided his caressing fingers. Thus it was with perfect amiability that he answered Dawlish.

"Truly," he said, and went on with his story. "'Madam,' I says, 'for all your kissfulness I'll swear that you have never been kissed by a king.' 'That is true,' she answered, staring, 'but how does that serve your turn?' 'No more than this,' I answer; 'that I am a king.' Lord, how she laughed, and Lord, how

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I laughed at her laughter, but when we had done laughing she bade me begone for a rogue. Straight I grew grave and swore I spoke the truth and was indeed, honest, black-visaged, six foot, there present, a king's son and a king. Whereat she began to grow angry."

"Never blame her," Garlinge interrupted; "I would not think you a King if I did not know it for truth." Charles took no notice of his companion's rudeness, but went composedly on with his story.

"She grew angry and gathered her gossips, and there stood I in a ring of Flemish maids and matrons, very comely for the most of them, with their firm flesh and their fair hair and their pale, strange eyes. And she told her colleagues how I was penniless and yet would make market with kisses, and had the impudence to call myself a king."

Most of Charles's listeners seemed by this time to have lost interest in the royal narrative and to be more busy in filling and emptying goblets than in following the royal adventure. Only Challis, that had made an end of eating, listened with a changeless attention, inclining his body a little forward, his grave gaze fixed steadfastly upon the face of Charles.

"What next?" Challis asked eagerly, and Charles with a grateful glance at his secretary, continued:

"Some of the lasses talked of sousing me in the horse-trough, but others seemed kind, which inspired me to go on with the game. So I vowed that my claim was gospel truth, and, while I spoke, who should come by but our worthy landlord, Peter Yeoman, that has lived and thriven here so long that he counts for a Flemish bigwig. I called to him, and the women fell back for



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his dignity and his furs and gold chain, and I even asked him to vouch for me."

"Did he back you?" Welcombe asked curiously, for he knew, as they all knew, that wealthy Peter Yeoman was none too proud of the glory of having a king for a tenant.

Charles joined cheerfully in the general laugh that favoured his follower's question, general save in the marked particularity that it did not include Mr. Secretary Challis in the scope of its hilarity. Mr. Challis's face was steadfastly grave. If it changed at all, even in the slightest degree, the change did no more than to suggest a faintly frowning disapproval of so much loose-lipped jocularity in the presence of the sovereign. Yet, indeed, Challis knew, as well as Charles and Charles's fellow-lodgers, that the mirth was not inexcusable. It was natural enough that Master Peter Yeoman should not consider himself, nor be considered enviable, in the possession of his royal tenant. Small as the rent had been, that Mr. Challis, after much bargaining, had arranged, on behalf of his royal master, to pay for such poor accommodation as their lodgings afforded, that small rent was already seriously in arrears. Indeed, after the initial payment of a week's rent in advance, which the secretary disbursed with a great air of patronage, Master Peter Yeoman had not been privileged to look again upon the colour of the King's money. The surprise, therefore, that questioned any resolute backing by the Burgomaster of the claims of his penniless tenant, seemed too natural to Charles to suggest the slightest resentment. But he had a surprise for the questioner in his answer to the question, and when he

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had made an end of laughing at his adherent's interrogation, he continued to chuckle on his own account for a couple of seconds before he condescended to continue his narrative.

"Did he back me?" he cried, echoing the Cavalier's query.

"Valiantly," Charles answered. "He assured the women, who must needs believe him, that I was indeed son of a king of England and that I claimed the English crown. But I think he was none too glad of my company, for thinking on the moneys we owe him, so he hurried away and left me with my college of women that were now as many declared friends as they had threatened to be flagrant enemies."

"What did they do?" the attentive Challis questioned, deftly taking advantage of a pause in the King's story.

"Why," Charles answered, "It was poor fellow! and fine fellow! and pretty fellow! from all, and she that was my first encounter asked if I were truly empty-belly and empty-purse. When I assured her, she mused awhile, with her plump chin in her plump fist, then she said that if I would regally kiss her and her fellows, each of the kissed ones would give me something edible to carry home with me. I vowed that I wished no better. No sooner said than done. In a jiffy I was tossing like a cork from one broad bosom to another, and tasting the richness of lips that were for the most part sweet enough, though some of them were too onionish for whole comfort."

Pippet, who had not spoken since the meal began, being too busy pacifying his hunger, now vouchsafed to manifest some curiosity.

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"How many were there?" he asked.

"Some forty, I guess," Charles answered, with a whimsical grin that lit up his strongly-marked face. "Truly, I have a kindness for women, but I like them better individually than in battalions. However, when we made an end of kissing, the baggages kept their pledges well. Plump Fleming vied with plump Fleming as to who should best plenish a beggar king. My first love gave me the ham with which you make such havoc, Pippet, and the others followed her lead, one giving food and another drink, till they had filled me this brace of sacks with vivers, and so I staggered home with their kisses on my lips, their laughter in my ears, and their bounty on my shoulders."

Charles made an end of talking, and plucking a flagon from the reluctant hand of Welcombe, he half-filled a cup, and lifted it on high.

"A health to our well-fleshed hostesses," he cried gaily, and tilted the vessel at his lips. Dawlish drained his bowl.

"Bless the jades for filling our bellies," he said, "I would do them the like if I could."

Welcombe and Kingfisher drank the toast in silence. Garlinge lifted his glass.

"A health to each sweet she-sinner in Breda," he shouted. Pippet rubbed his stomach contentedly.

"Gods!" he protested. "How good to feel my maw swell like a drum with a surfeit."

Kingfisher sighed a sigh of satisfaction.

"It is a long time since I have eaten more than was bad for me," he declared. Dawlish agreed with him.

"Or since I have felt half seas over," he said, and

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as he spoke he drank again. Welcombe formulated a question that had for some time been troubling him.

"Did the donzells give you any tobacco?" he asked. Charles nodded and produced a couple of rolls from the side-pockets of his shabby coat.

"Yes, bless their hearts," he said, as he flung them on the table. "I think there was nothing they would not have given me, but with the best will in the world, I am not Hercules."

If the Cavaliers had been overjoyed at the appearance of unfamiliar food and drink, they now seemed scarcely less delighted at the production of the Indian weed. They seized eagerly upon the tobacco, produced long pipes from the cupboard, and started to drink smoke with vigour.

Charles filled him a pipe and smoked as briskly as the rest. Challis alone of the company made no use of the herb, but returned to his desk and plied his pen. The King and his Court, well-fed and content, as he and they had not been for many a long day, sat for a while in silence, filling the air with grey clouds that floated lazily out of the open window.

Presently Dawlish paused between two puffs to question the King.

"Have you nothing more in your pockets?" he asked. Charles shook his head.

"Nothing more," he said promptly; then he suddenly seemed to recollect, and began to search his pockets.

"Nay, I lie," he protested.

"What is it now?" Dawlish asked. Charles drew a packet of letters from his jerkin, and glanced over them indifferently.

"Here be some letters that came to Master Peter's

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care, newly from England." He sorted the letters as he spoke.

"Master Peter was bearing them to me, when he found me with my viragoes, and they served to credit me."

He handed some of the letters to his secretary. "These to your care, Challis," he said, "they look political. This, I keep, 'tis from Culpeper. Here is one for you, Dawlish."

Dawlish snatched at the letter which Charles extended to him.

"Plague take it," he snapped, "why did you keep it from me so long? It may be from a woman."

He rose from his chair, hurried to the window-seat, and devoted himself to his letter. Charles looked at him with a sudden wistfulness shadowing the merriment of his face.

"Lucky devil," he sighed. "No woman writes to me." He was thinking, as he spoke, of Barbara Palmer, who had proved so amiably compliant a little while ago, when the breath of Fortune seemed to blow in his favour, but who had vanished from his sight into relentless distance when the vane obeyed an ill-wind. She was a fair, false devil, he admitted, and he assured himself that he was well rid of her, yet he knew, for all his wisdom, that he would have been happy to hear from her, that he would have rejoiced at her return, and ironical, in his self-knowledge, he grinned humorously. "After all, why should she?" he mused aloud. "Oh, lads, lads, if ever I come to be King, I shall be the sedulous lover of ladies, I promise you. It's never my swarthy face will frighten them then."

Garlinge smiled sardonically. "I think," he said,

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"your Majesty had better cultivate chastity, for you seem as likely to be made Pope of Rome as King of England."

Charles shook a playful finger at him. "You are a rascal," he said, then he seated himself at the table and opened his letter, which seemed from the first to afford him matter of entertainment, for his swarthy face wore an increasing smile as he read. Challis busied himself with the letters that Charles had given him, opening them and arranging them methodically upon the table, in the order of their importance. Garlinge and Pippet, Kingfisher and Welcombe, for whom there were no letters, betook themselves sulkily to their cards again.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE LETTER FROM CULPEPER

THE silence of the room was suddenly broken by a shout of laughter from the King, which roused Dawlish in his window-niche from the study of his letter.

"What's the jest, Charles?" he asked. Charles slapped his leg noisily.

"The best in the world," he answered, raising his head from his reading, and looking around him, with the heavy lines of his face all twisted and wrinkled in merriment. "Here's a tale to make old guts young and tough again."

Dawlish protested impatiently. "Tell it without prologue, Sire," he entreated, and his companions seconded him loudly. Charles, accepting the impatience of his followers, spread out the letter on the table and began. "Culpeper tells me that our great enemy, General Monk, that is so yellow-bellied a Puritan, is no better than the rest of us rake-hells."

He paused to estimate the effect of his statement upon his hearers. Garlinge raised questioning eyebrows.

"Your meaning?" he asked.

"It means," Charles continued, "that the good Abraham in armour is patriarchal enough to find one woman too little for his ease and must needs play the fly-by-night."

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He paused again. Dawlish voiced the general impatience.

"Come to the point, Charles," he implored.

"In a word," Charles continued, "the sanctimonious general has a lady-friend in Kent, that dwells at Quex Hall, by Birchington, and pays this lady a visitation weekly, no doubt to uplift her spirits with edifying discourse."

Garlinge held up his hand in affectation of the attitude of the Puritan.

"Here's a godly piece of work," he sniffed. Charles stretched his legs at full length, and thrust his hands deep into his breeches pockets.

"How droll it must be," he observed, "to witness a Puritan's love-making." He continued in a parody of the snuffing voice which it was the Cavalier custom to assume that all Puritans owned.

"Yea, verily, I tell thee, woman, that since it has pleased Heaven to let thee find favour in mine eyes, I shall even embrace thee as Abraham embraced Hagar."

The Cavaliers laughed loudly at their lord's humours. They would have laughed at anything that derided Puritans, in no matter how simple and obvious a manner. A donkey crowned with a steeple-hat and labelled "Lord Protector" or "Old Noll" would have seemed to them an exquisite witticism.

"Faith," Charles continued, encouraged by the applause of his subjects, "I like him better for it, but I cannot think it is true. He loves the law too well to be a lawless lover." Again the Cavaliers chuckled. It was wonderful to see how meat and drink had heartened their admiration for their King. But when they had all



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made an end of laughing, Challis leaned over across the table, and put in a word in his steady voice. "It is true. I have a letter from the Sealed Knot to the same effect."

Charles frowned a little at the mention of the Sealed Knot. He had no great affection for that mysterious little body of councillors, advisers and directors in England, whose counsels, advices and directions seemed to be bringing him never a jot nearer to the goal of his ambition, a desirable restoration.

"The gentlemen of the Sealed Knot, Sire," Challis proceeded, "suggest very guardedly something concerning Mr. Monk."

Charles showed annoyance at the manner in which his secretary had chosen to speak of his great antagonist.

"General Monk, man," he insisted, "General Monk. He has a soldier's right to the title, which our incivility cannot diminish."

Challis made a gesture of apology, and his pale face flushed a little at the least suggestion of disapproval from Charles.

"My mouth finds it nauseous," he said with quiet sadness, "to swallow a title which does not come from your Majesty, that is the fountain of honour."

He was silent a moment, as if to emphasize his loyal protest against the royal rebuke, and then continued his statement.

"The Sealed Knot have something to say about Mr.—" He paused, in obvious remembrance of the King's correction, and murmured, "about General Monk, and his amours."

"What have they to say?" Charles asked, with no great show of interest in the doings of the republican

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general, who was helping to keep him out of his kingdom. "Are they jealous of the lusty gentleman, and his sprightly gaities with the fair?"

"General Monk is very secret in this business," Challis continued, "and comes and goes through Kent untended. The Sealed Knot holds, therefore, it were an easy matter to get rid of the General on one of these journeys."

He repeated the suggestion of the gentlemen of the Sealed Knot in his quiet, easy voice, as if it were a thing of no moment, but Charles knitted his bushy black eyebrows.

"Get rid of the General?" he questioned. Challis, with a half glance at the paper which had informed him, explained further.

"Half a dozen resolute, cuddled in a Kentish lane, would make the knave carrion, yet all would be set down to deed of footpads, and your Majesty left free of his worst foe."

There was a little chorus of applause from the card-players, that had called a halt in their game to listen to Challis's statement. Dawlish, in the window-seat, rubbed his hands approvingly. "And a good plan too," he declared unctuously. Charles turned to him with a look of indignation disturbing the philosophy of his face. "Have we come to this?" he asked, "that we speak with cool lips and calm breath of killing by treason the man we cannot conquer by arms?"

The Cavaliers gaped at the punctilio of a penniless king. Garlinge shrugged his shoulders, and made himself the mouthpiece of their wonder and their disdain.

"Necessity knows no law," he affirmed. "So long as Monk lives you will never be King. Were Monk

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once out of the way, the party in England would have a reasonable hope of handling Lambert one way or another."

Charles shook his black mane fiercely, and glared at his courtiers in an access of veritable rage.

"I may be a king of vagabonds," he said; "but I'm hanged if I'll be a king of assassins."

The Cavaliers glanced pityingly at one another, as men who would fain ask why they served so poor-spirited a master.

"There's no reason for heat," Dawlish said grimly. "Monk may live for ever for all I care." Then followed a glum silence, which Challis interrupted, speaking with his usual measured composure.

"I did but convey the hint of the Sealed Knot," he said with blended deference and dignity. "I coupled it with no commendation of my own."

Charles turned to him abruptly.

"Write to the Sealed Knot to-day," he commanded. "Tell them that I would rather starve in exile than win a throne by such filthy tricks. I will be King by the Grace of God, not King by the favour of the devil."

He paused for a moment, and then continued more calmly:

"If this horrid deed were done, I believe that we should never gain by it. It would turn every doubtful enemy against us, it would alienate many possible friends. Monk alive is a deadly enemy, but Monk so dead would prove a far more lively foe.

"Then," Dawlish sneered, "I take it that your Majesty's objection to the scheme is based rather on its futility than on its wickedness."

"You are wrong," Charles retorted fiercely. "I did

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but use an argument that might appeal to you and those that think like you."

Charles was still really quite angry, and his anger diverted Dawlish vastly, though it fretted his colleagues. "Your holy indignation is a beautiful sight, Charles," he said mockingly. Charles turned to him, speaking with unfamiliar sharpness. "Nay, never look so scornful," he said. "It is rather for me to look sour, for you vexed me mightily."

Dawlish, feeling sure that he had the sympathy of the card-party in his little quarrel with Charles, made him an ironic bow.

"Your Majesty," he said tartly, "sometimes forgets that we share your Majesty's privations."

Charles echoed his companion's word scornfully.

"Forget it!" he cried. "Gadzooks, does any one of all the pack of you ever let me forget it? From dawn to dusk, and from dusk to dawn again there is never a pause to your caterwauling. Mew-cats. One would think I had done you some personal wrong in claiming my inheritance."

Dawlish grinned and kept silence. Kingfisher, Welcombe and Pippet fiddled with their cards nervously. Garlinge looked annoyed, and there was annoyance in his voice as he said stiffly:

"Your Majesty can scarcely deny our fidelity. Your Majesty would be alone at this present if we had done as others have done."

Charles turned to him derisively.

"Don't talk heroics, lads," he commanded, "for, upon my life, they become you little. You hoped that I would be King, and so you clung to me, and small blame

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to you either, for there was no one else in the wide world that needed your allegiance."

Every one of his hearers except Challis reddened with anger, and one of them attempted to interrupt the King.

"Your Majesty—" Dawlish began, but Charles cut him short impatiently.

"For God's sake," he said, "don't argue and protest. We have to herd together, and the herding is endurable enough so long as we wear smiling faces and speak smooth words, and pretend to be friends. But if we got to telling the truth about each other, where in the devil's name should we be?"

As he spoke, Charles flung himself into a chair and stared sullenly at his outstretched feet. Dawlish turned and glared sulkily out of the window. Pippet and Garlinge, Kingfisher and Welcombe looked at each other with an expression of anger at, and pity for, the folly of their sovereign. Challis acted as he always did, otherwise than his fellows. Rising from the table he went quietly to Charles, and kneeling, took his hand and kissed it. Charles instantly motioned him to his feet.

"Fie, man, rise," he said, and said it affectionately. "I know your love is faithful."

Challis rose to his feet, and with a smile of satisfaction on his face, returned to his table and his papers. The four other Cavaliers joined Dawlish in the window-seat, where the five whispered together and watched Charles where he sat, plunged in meditation, staring before him fixedly, and whistling softly a Cavalier tune.

Charles was thinking of many things, of his past, of his present, of his future. Thinking—philosophic, introspective thinking—was never a pastime that Charles

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cared to indulge in with any delight, but suddenly, on that day and hour, there seemed nothing for it but to think. The sullen grumblings of his companions in distress, the ludicrous circumstances which alleviated for the moment the extremity of their sheer physical needs, the silliness and viciousness of the unwise experimentalists that were his advisers in England, even the very devotion of Challis, so simply and candidly displayed, all had their effect upon the desolate refugee. Abruptly, in his musings, he dismissed the present; it was too unutterably uncomfortable. No less abruptly he refused to speculate upon the future, which seemed only, at its best, to promise the ignoble case of a pensioner upon the bounty of some grudgingly patronizing prince. It was with the past that Charles, in his heavy depression, preferred to dally, and he moved slowly through his memories, as the man that owns a picture-gallery saunters through his splendid collection of a wet morning, and feasts himself upon images of pleasure and images of pain.

## CHAPTER V

### CHEWING THE CUD

**I**T would be hard for a man with youth in his body and serious claims to a great kingdom to look back upon a more dismal past. He thought of that March morning, fifteen years ago, when he rode as his father's lieutenant to the West Country to do all that a King's son should do for a threatened king. He was only fifteen then, but the Black Prince was no more than a year older when he commanded his father's right wing at Crécy and halved the glory of the day. Was not Charles a black prince too, the little "black baby" of his mother's phrase grown to a black youth that was destined to be thus early tested in the stress of things? For all his youth, he was not unsifted in sour experiences. When he was hard upon his eleventh birthday, he was forced to learn that the world might be an uncomfortable world even for a great king. Now, perhaps, in the clouds of smoke that floated about him, he saw a picture of his childish self, standing in the fair Painted Chamber, and staring curiously at the sour or solemn faces of the assembled lords. It was hard for the lad to understand that he came there as his father's messenger, to ask a grace those nobles would not grant, to realize that the great Lord Strafford was to die, although it was the King's wish that he should live. Did the dreamer think, maybe, as he sat there muffled in the grey

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mist, that if Worcester had gone otherwise and ended with Westminster instead of with exile, no faithful servant would ever be abandoned by his king?

Thereafter the lessons of the new life came quickly. He saw the brave, smiling faces of the Prince of Wales's Own; he saw again the raw and stormy day at Nottingham, when Varney gave the King's standard to the conquering winds; he saw again the green hedgerow by Edgehill, where he and his brother James lay in shelter, and watched the wise Harvey ply his book till the passing of a cannon-ball disturbed him; saw himself that same day, pistol in hand, and hot to charge the enemy; he saw the foolish face of Berkshire, and the valiant face of Rupert, and the fumes from the seething-pot of Oxford. It was from that mad world of Oxford that he rode, drenched with the driving rain, and drawn with lack of food, on his ride to the West Country.

Yes, the Black Prince had been no more than a year older, but the Black Prince was in other case, the Black Prince had another kind of sire. While Edward the father disdained to aid Edward the son in his straits with the enemy, believing that he should fight his own battle and gain his own fame, Charles the father was zealously careful to keep Charles the son out of any possible harm's way. The lad might carry the sonorous title of generalissimo of all the King's armies in England and Wales, but it was the steadfast command of the parent that the son should keep housed in safe quarters, should take share in no action, should march with no army. If the dreamer had troubled his head to make the comparison, he might very well have absolved himself from all blame for that inglorious lieutenantship.



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What, under such conditions — so he might have challenged — could be hoped from a boy?

The dreamer smiled a little through the drifting wisps. If that time was tragic enough to look back upon, at least it was not all tragic. There were women's faces in it — would there not always be women's faces in any memories of his? There was the face of that woman who had been his nurse, and was wife of the Governor of Bridgewater at the time of that Western expedition. Did she not love him dearly, or seem to love him, delighting to parade her influence with a royal prince, delighted to hug and kiss him in public, that her authority might be proclaimed? Harmless kisses these, bringing nothing now but laughter to the lips that had suffered them patiently enough.

Another whiff of the pipe, and through the wreaths another picture of a woman's face appears, a girl's face this time, fair enough, even to memory long grown indifferent, and radiantly fair to the eyes of a boy. For now his thoughts had drifted from the West Country, had sailed the sea in *The Proud Black Eagle*, had aired the state of a royal Court in loyal Jersey, and known desire and the satisfaction of desire. There was a child, a boy hidden away in a safe corner of the world, that had the right to call him father. Charles dissipated this picture with an angry gust of smoke. He was then no better than a boy himself, with a boy's heat and a boy's heedlessness to plead for his forgiveness. The faces of women came swiftly enough now, once that theme was started for the musing brain to hunt. Through dreary days of kingship in Scotland, the memory of which made him shudder as he met it — through wild days of fight and flight in England, through long

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years of an exile ever growing uglier and hungrier and more hopeless, there were always the faces of fair women to recall with a smile or with a sigh. The fumes widened out and became as the walls of a picture-gallery, where Charles might walk at his ease and look on many comely countenances and rekindle burnt-out fires.

Charles shifted to a more comfortable position in his seat. He had drunk of the waters of disappointment till he might well believe that he had drunk them dry; he had walked in the desert of exile till his feet were so weary that they were tempted to welcome the rest of any shelter, were it no better than an almshouse. But even by the bitter fountain, and even in the burning sand, he had found roses and lifted their colour to his lips and cheered his heart with their fragrance.

He had been hopeful for a long time, in despite of rebuffs and crosses that would have broken a weaker spirit, but now, for the first time, he felt hopeless, as hopeless as a man can feel who is in excellent health and strength, and has only lived for thirty years. He was never one for speculation, or his scrutiny of the future might well have made him despair. He was not exactly imaginative where the deeds and thoughts of other people were concerned, but he made an effort to ask himself a question and to answer it. What would he do if he were in Monk's place in England and there were an exile in Breda that claimed a crown he had failed, time and again, to win? Charles grinned a little, and his strong teeth tightened on the top of his pipe, as he pictured himself a triumphant republican general with an army at his back. Why should he, if he were such an one, whistle invitingly to the exile overseas?

## CHEWING THE CUD

Would he not very certainly keep the throne for himself — though he might call it by no nobler name than the Chair of State — would he not thrust the keys of the treasury into his breeches pocket? No goldsmith, it may be, would be called upon to frame a crown to fit his forehead, but old Oliver had kinged it well enough without that royal emblem — however much he may have itched to assume it — and Charles assured himself that if Charles were Monk he would be content to enjoy the substance and ignore the symbol. All men act for their interest — so he asserted in his thoughts. Clearly Monk's interest was, having the power, to take and to hold. Which was paradisaical for Monk, but frankly damnable for Charles. If wishing were having, Monk's ambition would be nipped by an apoplexy. Yet not for a moment did he condescend to think of the advice to employ the hand of the assassin; to think of it even so much as to feel any sense of self-congratulation at having so sternly rejected it. If God were pleased to take General Monk to His Mercy, that were indeed a blessing for Charles, but it was not for Charles to anticipate the will of Heaven.

But if he could thus coolly calculate his ill-luck, and recognize it, and admit without impeachment that he had come to the end of his business, and come to it very badly, he was not at all despondent. He was never the one to be down-hearted after he had eaten well, drunk well, and smoked a pipe of good tobacco. His health, his strength, his shrewdness, his good-humour all agreed to take the hour that came and make the best of it. Once, in a company at the Louvre, someone had spoken in a rapture of Monsieur de Montaigne, and Charles, who, though he was no bookman, was always

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curious, questioned. He learned that Monsieur de Montaigne was a gentleman who had been a friend of his grandfather, and written essays for the purpose of learning how to die. Charles set him down at once as a waster of ink and paper, for his own purpose in life was to learn how to live. He would admit that he was mortal, but he never dwelt upon his mortality. His vitality burned with too keen a zest: life could never be either empty or meaningless, so long, for instance, as there was a woman to kiss. Moreover, he had faith, even though it were only of a practical character, that kept an account. "Good Lord, how I could serve Heaven, if Heaven would but make me King of England" might fairly represent the sum: it was not spiritual, but it existed, and it helped to keep him going. Now that it was flagrantly plain that it did not please Heaven to make him King of England, he pondered, with no distress of mind, on his next move in the game. What was the best thing for a king's son to do, that had lost his kingdom and seemed to be as friendless as beggared? He could find no answer to the query, and he did not linger over it. There must be something for a man to do that was six foot high and rich — his only riches — in the vigour of his prime. Surely he must have his value as a soldier of fortune. He chuckled for a moment at the thought of taking purses on the highways of Europe. Would it, he wondered, at all console plump burgesses if they could know that the man who had eased them of their gear was a king's son — had been himself a king? He considered more serious possibilities. A soldier's life would be likeable enough, but it would be hard to find service. The great princes would fight shy of a man who might always be regarded as a

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pretender by the English Government. He could only hope to take arms under some Power that was at war with England, and this he would not do. Should he join a fellowship of players? His French was good enough for the job. Or should he endeavour to get the permission of his enemies to settle in one of the American colonies? Tired of taking thought for the future, he turned again to the pages of the past.

It is always the way, in reviewing the yesterdays of the dead years, that the images of pleasure are more vivid than the images of pain. This was the case with Charles, who found that his recollections lingered less upon the miseries than the whimsicalities of his hideous Scottish kingship, less upon Worcester than upon what followed Worcester. It was no thought of the peril that dogged his flight that now moved in the chambers of his memory; it was no pity that stirred him for his cramped limbs crumpled together in the branches of an oak-tree, while his truculent pursuers hunted below him in vain. His thoughts jumped hither and thither skittishly enough, followed no order, were pleased now to consider yesterday, and now a day that had run its course fifteen years ago. What he was thinking of, as he neared the end of his screw, while the smoke drew hotter — and he often asked himself afterwards if some strange, unexplainable sympathy had not prompted those thoughts of his — what he was thinking of was the sight of a girl's comely face, the sound of a girl's melodious voice, the poise of a girl's dainty head, the manly courage that asserted itself in the soft body of a girl. "Faith," Charles meditated, "if we melancholy merry devils that are kings are no better than actors upon the world's stage, we sometimes have occasion to play with

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mighty pretty actresses." He was thinking at one and the same time of the fair, brave girl of those dodging days after Worcester, and of the pretty, painted, player-women of Paris. But there was an oddness, a fitness in his thoughts, as he was forced to remember later. Things that are about to happen do sometimes herald themselves thus.

## CHAPTER VI

### THE LADY OF BENTLEY

**S**UDDENLY there came a knock at the outer door, troubling the queer silence of the room. Challis instantly rose from his seat and respectfully addressed the King, who seemed wholly lost in his meditations.

"There is someone at the door, Sire," Challis said. Charles's mood made him oblivious to his surroundings. He did not hear Challis or, if he heard, did not heed him, being too deep in bitter-sweet recollections. Dawlish from the window-seat spoke mockingly to the secretary.

"Trouble him not," he said. "His wits are wool-gathering." Garlinge yawned an explanation of the knocking.

"'Tis some dun with a bill as long as the King's face," he suggested, and his companions laughed at the suggestion.

As he spoke, the knocking was repeated. Challis promptly quitted his table, and going to the door, opened it. He would not have been at all surprised if Garlinge's prophecy had been verified. Much to his surprise, he found himself face to face with a woman, a woman that was cloaked and hooded, a woman whose face was concealed by a mask of black taffeta. The masked woman stood before Mr. Secretary for a moment in silence. Then Challis addressed her, speaking in French first, at

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a venture. Had that failed, he could have essayed Dutch, for he was skilled in tongues.

"What is your business, madam?" he asked courteously, for the public carriage of Challis was ever courteous to women. As the woman was still silent, he continued, still using the French speech, but this time with a faint suggestion of impatience in his voice. "Your business, madam; you intrude upon the privacy of a king."

Immediately the woman answered him in a very sweet, clear young voice. She spoke in the language that Challis used, and her French was as good as the secretary's, which was exceedingly good, so that at the first Challis took the stranger for a Frenchwoman, and was untroubled by something familiar in the utterance. Through the holes in the mask the woman's eyes were fixed steadily upon the secretary's countenance, as if she were seeking to read his hidden thoughts.

"I seek no king, sir," she answered quietly.

"Then whom do you seek?" Challis asked with some faint impatience. He pointed, as he spoke, towards the Cavaliers that were seated in the window-seat, and that were all peering with eager curiosity in the direction of the door, in curious contrast with their sovereign, who sat with his back to the door, drowned in meditation and indifferent to passing events.

"Here," he said, "be my lords Garlinge and Ettington. Here is Mr. Pippet. Here is Mr. Kingfisher. Here is Sir John Dawlish. Is your business with any of these?"

The masked lady shook her head in a dainty way of denial.

"With none such," she answered decisively. Then suddenly she flung off her French speech as if she un-



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masked her voice, though she did not unmask her face, and she continued what she had to say in English. And then Challis knew what was familiar to him and was troubled in the knowledge. With her change of language the masked lady spoke louder.

"If the man I seek is here, as I believe he is, he will answer to the name of Will Jackson." She flung forth the two concluding words with a ringing note of challenge, and the sound of that name acted like a magician's spell upon the meditative King.

Charles sprang to his feet in an instant, all alertness. "Odds-fish," he cried, as he turned towards the door. "Who calls for Will Jackson here?" He strode forward as he spoke. "Come in, mistress," he cried joyously, though he could not tell why he rejoiced, "come in and show me your face, for the sound of your voice is so sweet that the sight of your face should be sweeter."

He was like a man suddenly roused from sleep and cheerless dreams by a pleasing interruption, but with his senses not yet sufficiently rallied, his perceptions not yet lucid enough to realize absolutely the full meaning of the interruption. Somebody had said "Will Jackson," and the name took him back to his younger youth, and he wondered, and wondering, welcomed the namer of the name.

As Charles spoke, the woman advanced slowly towards him, till she could have touched him if she had stretched out her hand. Then she threw back her head and, removing her mask, faced Charles steadily. Charles looked into the face of a young and very beautiful woman, and looking, the mist of bewilderment lifted, and his eyes glowed with delight and recollection and welcome.

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"Jane, Jane, Jane!" he cried joyously, his rapture rising with the thrice-repeated name. "If this be a dream, let me keep on sleeping."

Jane Lane was of tall stature for a woman, so that Charles had to bend his head but little to look into her eyes. She was, perhaps, twenty-six years of age, slender of limb, graceful of movement, blithe in a lively womanhood, bright with the prime of youth and beauty. The tresses of her dark hair framed a face whose fine oval carried still something of the delicate modelling and fair colour of a stripling girl. The fineness of her features tended to a gravity of countenance that did but interpret the native gravity that was at the core of her composition. Her cheeks were naturally pale, with the healthy clarity of pallor that went with her temperament and asserted a sound mind in a sound body. Her mouth was habitually firm and sweetly calm. One that had never seen it smile could scarcely believe that it might be more beautiful in animation than in repose. Her wide, steadfast eyes, blue with the haunting blue of English violets, of English summer midnights, seemed in their tranquillity to be mirrors of all noble emotions, courage and enthusiasm and faith. So, one that understood humanity would know that she showed in daily habit, in the common carriage of life. But now, though she stood there so still, so motionless, waiting for what should come, the eagerness that was absent from her bearing betrayed itself in her face. A faint flame kindled in her cheeks, her parted lips promised laughter; mirth shone in her eyes. If she was no longer a child, it was plain that she still cherished a child's high spirits, a child's lightness of heart, that if she seemed what any poet must name divine in her habitual composure, the

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divinity of her beautiful womanhood only gained when her humanity consented to make merry. Her courage, her enthusiasm, her faith, were wedded to a lively humour, to a gracious gaiety, to a blithe temper that made the best of life for herself and, better still, made the best of life for others. There might be more beautiful women in the world, there could be no one, so it must appear to any wise observer, that could make a better friend, and guess-work would be ready to declare that, where she loved, she must needs prove the perfect lover. So she seemed in a flash to that little group of Cavaliers that had never seen her before. So she seemed to the silent man who had admitted her, and who now stood sentinel of the table, revolving many memories of her in his mind. So she seemed to the exiled King that had known her well, tested her courage, shared her humour, roused her enthusiasm. His knowledge glowed in his glance and thrilled in his speech.

The girl blushed with pleasure at the warmth of her welcome. "Will your Majesty," she entreated, "forgive my boldness that called so loudly for one Will Jackson, that I knew as a serving-man times and whiles ago in England?"

As she spoke she made to kneel at his feet, but Charles caught her hands and stayed her ere her knees could touch the ground. "Rise, Jane, child, rise," he insisted, as he lifted the girl to her feet and looked fixedly into her smiling face.

"Oh, Jane," he cried fervently, "it is good to see you again. What wind of God has blown you to this cold corner?" "A loyal wind," Jane answered gaily, "a longing wind, and it bears my brother and me to your Majesty's feet."

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As she spoke, she looked with frank pleasure on the dear face of her King, that seemed so rejoiced to greet her, but when she had made an end of speaking, she looked around the room, as if she sought another face, and her glance rested for a moment on the face of Challis, where he stood by his table. The secretary had recovered from that first surprise, and his quiet gaze met hers with much melancholy recognition. Leaving him instantly, her regard travelled towards the little group of astonished Cavaliers in the window, that were gaping in amazement at the unexpected colloquy.

"But your friends stare, Sire," she said. "Will your Majesty be so good as to explain me?"

Charles turned to the Cavaliers.

"Sirs, let me bless you in presenting you to the fairest, bravest lady in all the world, Mistress Jane Lane of Bentley. Mistress Lane, this is my lord Ettington, this is my lord Garlinge, this Sir John Dawlish, this Harry Kingfisher, this honest Tom Pippet. And this is Master Challis, my faithful friend and secretary."

As each of the Cavaliers was mentioned, the girl returned his obsequious bow with a smiling salutation. When Charles uttered the last name, she said gravely:

"Master Challis and I are already acquainted."

Challis bowed again.

"I have that happiness," he said, and as he spoke, there came a sudden run of colour into his cheeks, and a sudden hunger into his quiet eyes, and his lips trembled a little when he had ceased speaking. Nobody, save Jane, noticed his emotion, which passed away almost instantly. The Cavaliers had no eyes for anything but the beautiful girl. Charles addressed his friends.

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"You must know, friends, that this is Mistress Jane Lane, that saved my life after Worcester."

The men whom Charles presented to Jane Lane were familiar with foreign courts and foreign cities, and in those courts and in those cities they had met many women that were fair to behold. They were all avowed masters of gallantry, and indeed, until these present evil days, they had little reason to complain that opportunity had been denied them of refining their wits and tempering their hearts in gracious intercourse with gracious ladies. But not even the most fastidious among them, and they each asserted the possession of a fastidiousness that would have done credit to shepherd Paris when he sat in judgment upon goddesses, would have been willing to admit that he could recall a face which he would venture to proclaim more admirable than that of the radiant stranger. Nor was there one among their number so hardened in the affairs and practices of passion as not to feel that to woo such a creature would be an exquisite privilege, and to find favour in her eyes a delightful reward. None of them were men that set store by delicacy of thought or discretion, either of imagination or of speech; their services in the Court of Love were frankly rendered to a god that might have the countenance of an angel, but that very certainly capered on the hooves of a goat. But they were wise enough, for all their creed of gratification and change, to be aware that the world is rich in many kinds of women, and that this one standing there so confidently, and yet so modestly, showing so full of cheer and mirth and courage, so sweet in the simplicity of her beauty, was made of other flesh than the flesh of which they had

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best knowledge, the flesh to be desired to-day and disdained to-morrow, to be won as one wins a game, and, won or lost, to be lightly loosened from memory. They showed their admiration vehemently.

"By God, lady," Dawlish cried warmly, "your name is as dear to us as any saint's." He caught up his hat that lay in the window-seat, and waved it in the air. "God save the lady of Bentley!" he cried lustily, and his companions echoed his cry, thunderously chorussing: "God save the lady of Bentley!"

The girl blushed faintly at the din.

"Sirs," she protested demurely, "your courtesy overgilds a little thing—" She was not suffered to speak further. Charles interrupted her, echoing her last words.

"A little thing!" he cried. "She risked her life for me. Risked it with smiling lips and blithe spirits. When I was in the dumps, with my courage oozing from the heels of my shoes—"

Here it was Jane's turn to interrupt, while she shook her head. "Will Jackson was never so while I rode with him," she insisted.

Charles laughed. "Faith, then I played my part better than I knew. Egad, gentlemen, I never could tell you how I felt in those days. It was all like a dream, and a damnable bad dream, save for one thing, and that was the presence of this heavenly lady."

The Cavaliers applauded their King's words in a rapture. Dawlish, who was ever the ready orator of the party, protested enthusiastically: "I vow I'd lose a kingdom lightly in such company."

Garlinge and the others struggled to say the same or better, tripping over their words. Challis alone was

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silent, standing motionless at his table. When the hubbub was done, Charles continued his praises.

"She was so brave, so gay, so gracious, that whenever I looked in her bright face, I forgot that I was flying for my life, that I had lost a kingdom, that there was a price upon my discrowned head, and my chill blood went tantivy anew."

Again the Cavaliers swung their hats ebulliently, again they broke into boisterous applause.

"Heaven bless you for a fair lady," Garlinge said enthusiastically, and Charles added fervently, "Amen." The girl exaggerated playfully a spirit of shyness. She held her hands before her face and peeped at her admirers through the lattice of her fingers.

"For pity's sake, Sire," she pleaded, addressing Charles directly, "no more words about me, or my vanity will whisk me into a peahen. There are few women in England, I thank God, that would not have done all I did, few women that would not envy me for my good fortune in being permitted to do the little I could do."

By this time the first wonder of her coming had waned, and Charles's soaring senses returned to a matter-of-fact world that demanded explanations of the unexpected presence of an angel. Charles began to question her.

"But what kind wind has carried you hither? I did not guess that you were out of England." He turned to his secretary, interrogating. "Did you know of it, Challis?"

Challis shook his head.

"No, Sire," he answered slowly, "I did not dream that Mistress Lane was for crossing the sea."

There was a curious eagerness in his voice, though he

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strove to repress it, a curious eagerness in his eyes, though he strove to conceal it. Jane noted the eagerness, but she showed no sign of notice, as she began to explain.

"Why, Sire, I came to find that there were eyes in England that pried too keenly into our quiet lives, my brother's and mine, so we took to our wings, the pair of us, like the wild geese, and we arrived here no later than last night."

"Is your brother here too?" Charles asked eagerly. It was a pleasing change to find friends seeking him.

"Indeed, your Majesty," the girl said, "and I was to have waited on your Majesty in his company this very day. But he went out awhile ago to see Master Peter Yeoman, and I grew tired of waiting, so I left word for my brother what I had done, and, like a bold jade, came here alone. Let my impatience to salute my sovereign plead for my impudence."

Charles applauded her, word and deed.

"Bless your impudence," he said, and smiled a delighted smile. He turned to his friends. "Gentlemen," he said, "you are free to go to your pleasures, or to your businesses, if ye have either. If ye have neither, then you are free to go to your idleness. We shall hold this sweet lady a prisoner until her brother comes to redeem her."

The dismissal was decisive and unquestionable. The Cavaliers were very reluctant to leave the company of the unexpected and beautiful guest, but there was no help for it, so each gentleman in turn made a grave obeisance to the lady and — except in the case of Challis — a salutation that was slightly less profound to the King. Then they quitted the room, and Charles was left alone with his visitor.



## CHAPTER VII

### THE VISION IN THE CRYSTAL

**T**HE steps of the departing Cavaliers sounded noisily along the passage, sounded less and less noisily as they descended the many flights of stairs that conducted from their grim Olympus to the distant world of the workaday town below. The gentlemen kept silence as they threaded the passage, kept silence for the earlier flights of staircase; only gave tongue with indistinguishable babble of speech when they had descended some half the distance to the far-away quays. The shrill insistence of their voices dwindled with each achieved landing, shrinking to insignificance as the speakers reached the street. Then their eager utterances were absorbed in the harmony of all the sounds that stirred the open air by the canal-side and that floated up attenuated, a lulling murmur, to the open window of the royal room, and gently wooed the ears of the pair that sat there with the mystery of its message. For there is always a mystery and there is always a message in the music of many mingled sounds that rise to a high chamber from a human hive. Each element of the concerted piece may be trivial enough; the clink of a horseshoe over the cobbles, the straining of a rope around a windlass, the cry of a child, the bark of a dog, the whistle of a bird in a cage, the snatch of a sailor's chanty, the break of water against the bows of barges, against its banks of stone. To the lonely listener, who finds content in loneliness, the mes-

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sage encourages ease and quiet, meditation and dreams. To the listener whose spirit rises in revolt against solitude the message is like the summons of a trumpet, kindling unrest, quickening the wish to be in the thick of things, to descend and do, do well. To Charles in his loneliness it had often spoken with both meanings, but now Charles was not alone, and the song of the city was thrilled with an unfamiliar joy.

The pair sat opposite to each other, man and maid, for a little while in silence. The silence was born of the sudden, not unnatural embarrassment that followed, now that they were alone, upon the warm exultation of the unexpected meeting after so many days. In the silence they were thinking thoughts. Some of their thoughts were like enough, and busied themselves with those days long past in England, when Jane Lane rode in company with Will Jackson, and feared an enemy in every passer-by. Charles thought of those days with pleasure, remembered how he thought of them on this morning with a kind of prophetic instinct. He had found a strange, fierce pleasure in those days and hours of companionship, though he had played his last stake and lost it, though the crown seemed gone for ever, though his life, as he shrewdly guessed, would be in jeopardy if he fell into the hands of his enemies. Yet, so memory assured him, in those days of danger he thought little of his own peril and much of Mistress Lane. He had thought her then, and he thought her now, looking again into her face, one of the fairest women he had ever seen, and he knew her for one of the bravest and one of the gayest at a time when, if bravery could be commanded, gaiety was hard to wear.

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The sorrow of his escape from England was sharpened at the time by the need of saying the girl farewell, and whenever his thoughts turned to England in the years of intrigue and disappointment that followed, he always dwelt with tender recollection upon the face of Jane Lane. He had heard of her time and again during those years in letters from home, in letters from his sister, and he had thought often, dreamed, with a gradually dwindling hope, as his plans and plots fell to pieces about him, of seeing the girl again on his return to England. Now, at the moment when that return to England seemed for ever denied, here was the girl herself, as fresh and comely and smiling as in the days of their adventure together.

Such were the thoughts of Charles and such, from her point of view, were some of the thoughts of Jane Lane. But while Charles was not thinking at all or caring at all how it came to pass that Jane Lane was in his presence, merely accepting the thing as a delightful favour amazingly accorded to him by a none too kindly destiny, Jane Lane was thinking much of her coming and its cause, and wondering what would result from her enterprise.

The days, the years which had brought Charles so much tribulation, that had carried him reluctantly through so many vicissitudes, had been melancholy years for Jane Lane. Loyalist to the core, her heart's desire was for the triumph of the King, but the edge of her heart's desire was whetted by the knowledge that her rightful King was the gallant youth whom she had known as Will Jackson, at the time when a common peril made them equal. In those years she

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had watched with saddened eyes the triumph at home of the King's enemies, the failure abroad of the King's schemes. Her brother could serve the King, and had served the King in many ways; she, it seemed, could do little or nothing except to wait and be patient.

Then, suddenly, there seemed to come to her the chance, or the possibility of a chance, to do something for the cause. An accident, if ever there be accidents in the affairs of great princes, and not the direction and the determination of Providence, seemed to show her the way of service. There was nothing that more discomfited the soldiers and adherents of the exiled King in their attempts to bring about a Restoration, than the way in which secret knowledge of all their devices and deliberations was somehow or other conveyed to their enemies in England. It began to appear impossible for the supporters of the Stuart cause to shape any scheme or weave any conspiracy of which the most intimate details were not immediately communicated to the governors of the Commonwealth. More than once, traitors had been discovered in their ranks, and dealt with sternly, for the necessity of their cause could not permit of mercy for such treason. Yet, though traitors might be removed, the treason still continued, insidious, mysterious, sapping the strength of the royal cause and weakening the courage and the confidence of its supporters. It was plain that the Commonwealth must pay well to obtain such amazing service, amazing in its shameful faithfulness to its paymaster, but of late it grew harder and harder for Charles's advisers to form even suspicions as to the channels by which their purposes leaked out.

Now, accident — if it were accident — had given Jane

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Lane reason to believe that she might help to unravel the mystery of the secret treason, and it was with this thought in her mind that she had travelled to the Low Countries in the company of her brother.

Thoughts like these danced swiftly, myriads to a single second, wherefore the silence that reigned over the room enjoyed no more than a few instants of dominion. Then the pair looked each into the other's eyes, and in that glance all diffidence dissolved. Jane smiled, and Charles smiled, and then Jane spoke:

"I hope," she said, "that I am forgiven for coming so unceremoniously into your presence."

Charles caught the girl's hand again.

"Dear Mistress Jane," he cried, "I have no royal words for your welcome, but I welcome you." Jane's face glowed with pleasure.

"I am glad to find your Majesty in so happy a disposition," she said, and her smiling eyes confirmed her words. But now the light on Charles's face faded, and he shook his head.

"Happy, Jane, happy!" he repeated, with a queer break in his voice. "I wear a zany's face with those poor devils who cling to me, but with you, Jane, I can be, not seem. And the sum of it all is that I am a very miserable creature."

He sighed heavily as he spoke, and released her fingers. He looked, indeed, all of a sudden, a picture of dejection. The mask of hilarity had fallen and left him abject in the consciousness of his ruin. Jane sighed in sympathy, but she still smiled.

"Alas, poor King," she said, with a note in her voice as if she feigned that the King made merry, but Charles would not have it so.

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"I am not jesting, Jane," Charles protested. "Dear God, if you knew how relieved I am to be able to speak freely, to drop the grinning vizard, to show myself nakedly, the haggard, banished man."

Jane held out her hand and laid it for a moment gently on his. "Sire," she said softly, and there was a world of pity and sympathy in her voice.

"I would admit this to no one but you," Charles went on. He had covered her hand with his and held it so prisoned while he spoke. "My cause is quite hopeless. My moneys are spent, my last possessions pawned, every source anticipated. The princes of Europe will have nothing to do with me. Every enterprise I have undertaken has failed. My enemies multiply. My friends, as you see, have dwindled to the handful of hungry bandits that huddle in this garret."

Jane looked at him steadily, and touched herself lightly on the breast with her free hand. "I am your friend," she said.

Charles gave her a grateful look.

"Dear child," he said sadly, "you saved my life once, but even your woman's wit cannot give me back the kingdom I have never ruled."

Jane laughed a little half-defiant laugh.

"I dare not think what I could do if I gave my mind to it," she said quietly.

Charles admired her, and gave tongue to his admiration. "You were always a girl of spirit, Jane," he said, "but it is of no avail. I am a dying fire; if you rake the embers together you may make a little glow, but you cannot fan me into living flame again."

"Who knows," Jane said thoughtfully. She gently released the hand that Charles still seemed anxious to

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keep captive, and sat for a moment with her fingertips pressed together, and a pretty air of meditation on her face.

"You speak," she said gravely, "as if the heavens were hung with black, as when King Henry the Fifth died. But I am all for roses and garlands, for, indeed, I have seen them."

"Seen them!" Charles echoed, "What do you mean, dear maid?"

Jane looked at him for a moment with a dainty air of indecision. Then she put her hand into the bosom of her dress and withdrawing it showed him her outstretched palm. A small crystal sphere rested on the pinkness, a glassy globe on a plane of delicate flesh.

Charles looked surprised. "What toy have you there, child?" he asked.

"When I was a little maid," Jane answered, "my old nurse gave me this for a keepsake. It is a magic crystal, Sire, in which wizards and those that are kin to wizards can see visions of things to be. Let us sit, Sire, and see if we can see things worth seeing."

Charles, who still housed the lively curiosity of a boy, seemed excited.

"Zooks!" he cried. "Let's have a peep, Jane dear." As he spoke he rose, and Jane rose with him, the crystal still gleaming in the cup of her fingers.

Charles took the girl's hand very gently and drew her to the window-seat, and they sat side by side together. Down below could be heard the soft sound of lapping water against the slowly moving barges, and the faint babble of distant voices. Charles and Jane felt very far away from the world in that eyrie of theirs; Jane and Charles all unconsciously felt very young as

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they peered together, with their heads very close together, at the crystal that rested upon the girl's palm. Jane explained the usage of the mystical toy to her companion in a clear, low voice.

"After you look at the sphere for a while," she said, "there should come a little cloud, a little white cloud from the heart of the crystal. For a while this cloud will fill the globe with a milky vapour; then it will begin to lift, and when the cloud dissipates you will see sights."

"I am overclouded enough as it is," Charles said, pretending to grumble, yet truly enchanted with his companion and her witchcraft. "But I can see my fortune clearly. I see an ill-looking, gawky fellow in shabby clothes, drifting from foreign capital to foreign capital, hat in hand to every callous grandee he encounters and palm held out to catch any alms that may be tossed to him. He will be bandied from country to country, this sorry vagrant, no one eager to welcome him, everyone anxious to get rid of him, and he will die at last in some garret or ditch as occasion may serve, and so an end of him."

Charles had begun blithely enough, but as he continued his picture, he soured, and at the end he spoke very bitterly. Jane's voice caressed his sorrow.

"Nay," she said, "I see quite another vision, though the same man moves in it. I see a wonderful beautiful brave sight; I see a great London street all bright with flags, and brisk with holiday-makers packed thick on either side of a lane of loyal soldiers, and all, soldiers and subjects, have smiling faces, for down this lane in royal garments rides Charles the King, on his triumphant way to his palace of Whitehall."



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Even as her voice rose in the jubilant presentation of her hope, her belief, Charles gave a little cry of pain. For the instant, this play with the crystal had taken possession of him and made him humble.

"Often and often," he confessed sadly, "I have seen that vision painted on the air about me, but I shall see it no more, neither in my dreams nor in any wizard's crystal." He made a gesture of despairing impatience, and turned away from the sphere which the girl fondled.

"It has faded beyond recall," he said grimly. Then, seeing that the girl looked disappointed, he continued more gently: "Let me look in the sphere again."

In obedience to his words and his gesture, Jane held the little globe to him again, tendering it as she might have tendered the crown. "See, Sire," she said. Charles bowed his head and pretended to see sights in the crystal. When he spoke it was in a spirit of humour. "There is a new play on the stage," he said, "with that same lanky, ill-looking, unlucky lubberkin for its hero. But he is no longer a tattered tramp, cadging for manna from mocking potentates. He calls himself plain Charles Stuart, he has taken to some honest trade, and whistles gaily as he makes his livelihood."

Jane stared at her companion in very real surprise at his altered manner. "Why, what has wrought this change in the gentleman?" she asked.

How it would have amazed Charles if he could have been told on the morning of that day, that ere the day was well advanced he would be looking at a woman, whom he had not seen since he left England, with the eyes of a lover, with the eyes of an honourable lover. Short as had been his speech with Jane Lane, it had served, not merely to rekindle the sweetest memory of

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his youth, but to rouse in him a fierce detestation of the life he had been living. Why, he asked himself, should he continue to ape the forms of royalty in a dismal garret, surrounded by brawling and grumbling adherents? If fate had decided that he was not to be king, he would, at least, decide for himself that he would be a man and lead a man's life. On the instant it seemed to him that the best thing in the world — a far better thing than the winning of any kingdom — would be to win this woman's love, and as he thought thus, the past years seemed to slip away from him, and he was once again the fugitive boy King, riding through the sweet-smelling English woods with a girl of sixteen by his side, whose presence made him forget his peril and his disinheritance. These thoughts stirred him with passionate impulse; wild words surged in his mind. It was never a likely thing for Charles to find himself alone with a pretty woman, and hold back from love-making of one kind or another. Jane Lane charmed him, allured him, but the charm, the allurements, were of an unfamiliar kind. She had suddenly come to him, radiant, enchanting, unexpected, like some fairy lady from an old wife's tale: she seemed to his heated fancy to be the visible sign of that new life which in his meditations he had seen himself ordained to live. The love that a King could offer to a woman that delighted him was, as Charles knew with unquestionable certainty, the love that Jane Lane would never accept. But Charles had realized that he was no longer a king, that the game which he had played so wearily and drearily for fifteen years was irreparably lost. He was now no more than a man among other

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men, a man unshackled, untrammelled, free to choose his mate where he would.

It is possible that Charles might then and there have so far yielded to his excited mood and his spinning imagination as to answer Jane's laughing question with passionate protestations, passionate entreaties, which would have been perhaps as amazing to the speaker as to the hearer. But fate chose to delay his declaration. Even as Charles, with flushed cheeks and shining eyes was about to speak, he knew not what, his purpose was arrested by a knocking at the door.

## CHAPTER VIII

### THE COMING OF COLONEL LANE

CHARLES frowned at the unwelcome interruption to his wooing. "Plague on him for a meddler, whoever he be," he said angrily, and then seeing that Jane was smiling at his impatience, called loudly, "Come in." In answer to his order, the door opened and Challis entered the room, apology on his lips and in his eyes.

"Your Majesty must forgive my importunity," Challis said, "but Colonel Lane is without. I met him in the street. He was eager to wait upon your Majesty, so I brought him hither."

Charles turned to Jane quickly.

"Your brother," he cried, with as much pleasure in his voice as was possible to a man that had been so grievously interrupted. Then he turned to Challis. "Admit him, man. Why do you keep him waiting?" he said, with a sudden sharpness.

"I did not know, Sire—" Challis began, with the manner of one that would again deprecate an ill-timed entry, but Charles cut him short.

"You should have known," he said peremptorily, "that I am ever ready to receive so true a friend as Colonel Lane, and would never keep him waiting."

Challis bowed. "I am sorry, Sire," he said, with his habitual grave air of respect. His face carried its

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habitual mask of quiet inscrutability. If the sharpness of his King's rebuke had pained him, he showed no sign of pain. If he had taken advantage of a chance meeting to return unexpected, and to interrupt the conversation of Charles and Jane, his countenance betrayed no hint of such a purpose. Calm and suave as ever, he turned from the irritated monarch and stepped to the door. A second later he introduced the guest he had heralded into the room, and took his leave with a profound reverence.

The new-comer was a tall, soldierly-looking man that carried himself erect, and looked the world in the face with cheerful steadfastness. One skilled in the appreciation of humanity would soon decide that here was a nature admirably adapted for the doing of difficult deeds which were planned by others. His would not be the conceptive mind that would devise far-reaching schemes, and nimbly spin the web of difficult intrigues. But to such a mind he would bring the executive hand, the dauntless heart, the faithful patience, that carry great undertakings to triumphant issues. To the ordinary onlooker he would have seemed no more than a characteristic county gentleman, who loved the open air and whose countenance, tanned deeply with sun and wind and rain, curiously enhanced the brightness of his honest eyes.

"I humbly greet your Majesty," Colonel Lane said, and then stood quietly at ease, waiting upon the King's favour. Charles held out his hand in cordial greeting.

"You are very welcome, dear Lane," he said, and the words rang very earnest and true. "Your sweet sister heralded you."

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Lane gave his sister an amiably reproachful glance, uttered amiably reproachful speech.

"I thought you would wait for me, Jane," he said.

Jane smiled back at him. "I was too impatient, brother," she answered, and seemed to think the answer apt and sufficing. But there remained a shade of doubt on Lane's face which Charles sought to dissipate. He misunderstood its meaning, but his words made plain what he thought it meant.

"Do not look so glum, man," he cried. "Though they give me a bad name in England, Jane Lane may visit Will Jackson in safety. For whatever Charles Stuart may be, he can still remember that he is a gentleman and that Mistress Lane is a gentlewoman."

A sudden light of mirth shone in the Colonel's blue eyes, and his lips for an instant twitched with a swiftly repressed inclination to smile. For indeed he had been troubled by no such thought as the King attributed to him. If ever he had entertained any doubts of the King's honour and conduct—though, indeed, he had not, for he rightly believed Charles to be too grateful for the past to choose to wrong the present—he had no doubt of his sister and her ability to protect herself. However, he kept his thoughts to himself, and answered the King according to the King's humour.

"Indeed, Sire," he asserted earnestly, "there was no such thought in my mind. I did but envy my impatient sister the privilege of being the forward first to wait upon your Majesty. But, Sire, if I come tardy I was belated on your business."

Charles did not seem to heed Lane's apology. "I fear," he said, looking earnestly into Lane's face, "you bring no good news from England."

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Lane shook his head and looked grave. "None, Sire," he answered frankly. "There are still strong men in England that itch for dominion, and of all these Monk is without question fâ'r and away the strongest."

Charles sighed at the name that he began to regard as fatal. "This Monk is our ruin," he said gloomily. Lane agreed.

"If it were not for him, Sire," Lane went on, "our cause might show more hope, but this fellow Monk is so strong, so stubborn, so cunning, so implacable, so ambitious, that while he lives it would seem that our cause is lost. There is no other word for it, to be honest."

In spite of the seriousness of the situation, Charles permitted himself to smile at a lively fancy. "Yet I hear," he said, "there are weak points in his immaculate armour." He was thinking of the news he had heard that morning in the letter that had moved him to laughter. He pictured anew the stern Puritan soldier mysteriously visiting his Kentish sea-town, and there pursuing in private his secret amours. It tickled Charles's cynical spirit to think that a professed clean-liver should be no other than a hypocritical libertine. This was just as it should be; it justified his dislike of the man. So he grinned in Lane's face as he hinted his hint. But Lane did not grin back responsive; rather he stared at Charles in astonishment.

"I know of none, Sire," he declared.

Charles shrugged his shoulders. "They will avail us nothing, so let them pass."

"Nay, Sire," Jane pleaded, "let us know where our enemy is vulnerable. Has Monk the heel of Achilles?"

Thus adjured, Charles consented to retail the substance of Culpeper's letter, with such slight adjustment

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of particulars as he deemed advisable in a woman's presence. He dilated with a spacious delight upon the delicious hypocrisy of the Puritan chief, and rocked with jolly laughter as he pictured Monk, muffled to his nose in his cloak, riding along the Kentish lanes to his flame. Colonel Lane and Jane Lane shared temperately in their royal master's mirth; the former, who had no great sense of humour, thinking the whole matter of very little importance, and the latter, having a keen sense of humour, seeing the jest and tasting it, and finding it embittered by her scorn of the double face.

His Majesty, finding that his spicy narrative had fallen, to his thinking, a little flat, was not, unnaturally, inclined to change the drift of the conversation. He had grown so used of late days to the mental and moral attitude of his companions, that badinage, to put the matter in its mildest terms, had come to represent the vernacular of human intercourse. Men like Colonel Lane, women like Jane Lane, were unfamiliar figures in his wizened world, and he found himself, in a sense, at a loss. It was evident that his two hearers took the Puritan General more seriously than he or those whom he harboured were accustomed to do, and the discovery perplexed him. So when he had told his tale, and found that, from his point of view, it hung fire, he felt that it was necessary to talk of something else, and, feeling the necessity, surrendered to it.

"Tell me, where are you lodged?" he asked.

"We are at the 'Crown,'" Lane answered. Charles made a wry face at the name.

"A vile place," he protested. "Hearken, I would have you both near me, for I think I have no better friends in the world. How would it please you to dwell



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under the same roof that shelters Charles Stuart?" As he spoke, he glanced at Jane, to see how she would welcome the suggestion, but her head was for the moment averted, and he could not see her face. Lane again bowed profoundly.

"We should indeed be happy," he declared, "if the thing were possible."

"The thing is possible, and so it shall be," Charles cried, delighted at his old friend's acceptance of his proposal. "There is a run of rooms below us that now lie tenantless. I will send Challis to speak to Master Yeoman at once, for he is my landlord here."

"Nay, Sire, let me do this," Lane entreated, but Charles was not to be persuaded, though Lane assured him that he had already made acquaintance with Master Yeoman, and could easily make treaty with him.

"No, Jack, no," Charles insisted, "I will sing your praises so sweetly, paint your merits in such lively colours, and above all, dwell so tenderly upon the length and fullness of your purse, that he will be the less pressing for any little arrears that I, in the barrenness of my exchequer, may have fallen into." Charles paused for a moment, and then began again, in a somewhat embarrassed voice. "If you be not in straitened means —"

Swiftly Lane made bold to interrupt the King. "I thank Heaven, Sire," he said cheerfully, "I have something to spend in your Majesty's service."

Charles's face showed pleasure at the loyalty of the friend and pain at the need for loyalty so to assert itself. "Nay, nay," he said, "keep it for yourself, man, for yourself, and for Jane here. To give money to me is all one as to fling it into the sea. I have a hungry little Court, a greedy little Court to support, but they

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shall not feed on your savings. Poor devils! they live a dull life of it. Well, I will send Challis at once to see goodman Landlord. Wait here till I return. If you have stomach for meat and drink, for the moment neither larder nor cellar are tenantless."

Colonel Lane protested that neither he nor his sister were fasting, and, having made his protest, would fain have stayed the King's departure. But Charles was obstinate, and Colonel Lane's objections froze on his lips, as he received a glance from Jane that suggested, quite unequivocally, silence and acquiescence. So Charles was suffered to depart without further controversy.

## CHAPTER IX

### JANE'S WAY

**W**HEN the King had left the room, Jane, that had listened with a smiling face to the King's plans for their housing, turned to her brother, with a face suddenly grown grave as fate.

"I wished the King to leave us," she said, and there was a significance in her speech which made her brother stare at her in surprise. "Why?" he asked.

Jane came close to her brother and spoke in a low, eager voice. "We are alone here in the King's rooms," she said. "Alone in all likelihood until the King returns. We might never have such a chance again."

Lane still seemed puzzled. "What chance, Jane?" he questioned, gazing at the girl's flushed face. Jane was silent an instant, and then spoke gravely.

"There is someone in the King's service that is betraying the King."

Lane shrugged his shoulders. It was scarcely new news to a loyal Cavalier to be told that someone was playing his sovereign false. But he interpreted treason in many ways.

"I think the most of them betray him," he said. Jane nodded and smiled, signals that she understood her brother's thoughts.

"You mean because they are quarrelsome, ungrateful,

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discontented, thinking more of themselves than of their master. I mean more than that."

"What do you mean?" Lane questioned again. He had such a knowledge of, and regard for, his sister that he knew she never spoke earnestly without reason to be earnest.

"You know the man John Barstow, in London," Jane said, answering question by question. "The man that is up to the neck in every Royalist plot?"

"I know the man," Lane answered shortly. His knowledge of John Barstow was slight. He disliked the man and felt his dislike unreasonable, yet nevertheless cherished it.

"Has he ever been in a plot that succeeded?" Jane asked. "He has sent men to their deaths again and again. Has his own skin ever been scratched?"

"He has been more fortunate than many of his fellows," Lane answered gravely. If he had ever thought what Jane was plainly thinking he had never put it into words. But he felt sure that Jane was about to put it into words.

Jane continued vehemently: "When a man in a losing cause is ceaselessly good-fortuned, when he escapes, not once, but time and time again, the nets that ensnare his companions, it is no less than permissible to wonder if it be chance, and only chance, that befriends him."

She spoke with so unfamiliar a fierceness that her brother stared at her in amazement. "What do you know of the man?" Lane asked. He could not understand how Jane could know much of the man.

"I know," Jane answered, "that he often receives letters from abroad." Lane did not restrain a kindly smile at the inconsequence of the speech.

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"Naturally," he said, "he is the King's trusted agent in London, and it would be passing strange if he did not receive foreign letters."

"I would give much to see one of those letters," Jane said thoughtfully. She glanced as he spoke at the leather bag which lay on the table, the leather bag which contained the correspondence of shabby King and shabby Court, and went on. "I wonder if there be a letter to him in yonder bag." As she uttered the words she went to the table and in all composure laid her hands upon the bag.

Lane instantly put forth his own hands to stay her, while he questioned her, astonished.

"Jane, Jane, what are you going to do?" Jane answered him tranquilly, smiling eyes and smiling mouth.

"I am going to satisfy my curiosity," she said, and, so saying, she quickly opened the bag and drew forth handful after handful of its contents, reading as she did so the address of each letter before returning it to its home. For a while the reading seemed to give her no pleasure. "To my lord this, to my lord that, to Sir John Culpeper." So she murmured, studying each letter with a waxing fury. Suddenly the disappointment which had been growing on her face disappeared, and she gave a little cry of relief. "Ah," she cried, exultant, "here is a letter addressed to Master Barstow, a letter written in the hand of Mr. Secretary." She held out her hand to her brother. "Lend me your pocket-knife, brother."

"What for?" Lane asked, gaping at her as he drew from his pocket a small knife.

"To open this letter," Jane answered as composedly as if the examining of other people's correspondence was

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one of the ordinary occupations of a young lady. "It is sealed, it is true, but if I heat the steel I can slip it under the wax. I know that is how they serve our letters often enough in London."

As she spoke she took the knife briskly from her brother's reluctant fingers, and proceeded to do as she had said. She turned to where, on the table, the taper that Challis used for the sealing of his letters still burned with its little quivering flame. In this flame she held the blade of the knife, testing its heat with a cautious fingertip after a few seconds. Her brother watched her proceedings with an air of comic dismay.

"You must not do this," he protested, but there was no decision in his protest equal to the decision of Jane's action. Strong man though Colonel Lane was, he had a way of yielding to his wonderful sister.

"I must indeed," Jane said firmly, as she satisfied herself that the steel blade was at the heat she needed; "am I to poise on punctilio where the King's interests are at stake?" With a neat decision, she placed the heated metal in contact with the forbidding seal.

"If you were only certain," Lane said dubiously, "but this is mere moon-mad guess-work."

Jane smiled back cheerfully at him. "There be times," she said, "when I would sooner trust to my guesses than to a philosopher's knowledge. That is one of the few advantages of being women, that they have intuitions denied to men."

As she spoke she was slowly working the edge of the blade under the wax of the seal. While she worked she went on talking. "There is a traitor here, I'll swear it," she asserted. "It is at least not impossible that the man may be Master Challis."

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"Master Challis," Lane retorted, in a voice that expressed his entire disagreement with his sister's suggestion, "is of an approved devotion to his Majesty."

"He talks big," Jane admitted scornfully. She remembered something of the cunning of Challis's speech in former days, and acted now greatly upon that memory.

"He never grumbles like the others," Lane urged. Jane laughed a little mocking laugh.

"It is natural for men to grumble when they are hungry," she said. "It is hard to curb the stomach when it cries cupboard."

"Master Challis suffers with the rest," Lane asserted, arguing against his sister's dogmatism. Jane shook her head again.

"No, no, I doubt it much, brother. Had you been here but now you would have noticed how raggedly my lords and gentlemen, the King's companions, were clad. But it was not so with Mr. Secretary."

"Did he go in gold and purple?" Lane asked teasingly; but Jane did not heed the mockery in her brother's voice.

"He was very soberly habited," Jane said, "but the cloth was good enough, and he wore fine linen which the others did not, and his shoes were trim, while the others were down at heel." She was busy while she spoke with the task she had undertaken, and as she ended her summary of what she had noted, the blade of the knife passed wholly under the wax and the letter was at her mercy.

"You are foolish, Jane," Lane said, still with a distressing lack of gravity. "Would you proclaim a man a patent traitor because he is nice as to his person? Surely your wit travels wide of the mark."

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"That we shall soon know," Jane answered. She opened the letter's elaborate formality of envelopment, and, as she did so, a small piece of folded paper that had been enclosed fluttered on to the table, and she caught it up. Holding this in one hand, she glanced over the opened letter, and looked disappointed. "The letter is fair-sailing enough," she admitted reluctantly, "but there was a folded piece within that may have other news."

On the word she opened the folded paper and gave a little cry of disappointment.

"What is it?" Lane asked eagerly. For all his professed scorn he had followed Jane's actions with curiosity. Jane looked annoyed.

"It is written in cipher," she answered fretfully.

For a moment Lane looked almost as disappointed as his sister. "Then you have wasted your pains," he commented.

Jane denied him vehemently. There was a tough fibre of obstinacy in her composition. "Never was cipher written that cannot be read with patience," she said doggedly, frowning at the mysterious missive.

"But you have no time for such patience," Lane asserted, "so I say you have lost your labour."

"Never think it," Jane protested. "I will close this letter up again and it will show as if it had never been troubled. But, instead of this cipher, it shall carry a folded piece of blank paper, and for this cipher, I will even keep it myself and ponder upon it till it shall deliver me its secret."

As she spoke she acted upon her speech. She took a piece of blank paper from the drawer of the writing-table, folded it as the cipher paper had been folded,



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and placed it in the letter she had opened. That letter, with its meaningless enclosure, she folded again in its original form, and sealed it with the same wax and the same seal that Challis had used a little while before, when he had finished writing it. Then she turned to her brother with a look of triumph. "Very soon," she said, "I shall know what to make of this missive," and she slipped the cipher paper into the bosom of her dress.

Lane was now as excited as his sister.

"The King must know of this at once," he said eagerly, but Jane shook her head. "No, no, no," she cried emphatically, "the King must know nothing of this. Let Master Spy think himself safe, hug himself in his fool's paradise. He can do no more harm for the moment, for he will think that whatever mischief he meant is on its way to England."

The brother and sister could plot no more just then, for at that juncture they heard the sound of brisk steps in the corridor outside, and a moment later Charles entered the room. His Majesty was in high spirits; he chuckled and rubbed his hands, as he told the Lanes how he had decided to accompany Challis to interview Master Peter Yeoman, and how they had found Master Peter undoubtedly amiable, and very willing when he had heard Lane's name, whom he knew, to accept him as a tenant for the apartments beneath those of Charles, at a reasonable rent. Charles's spirits were at the high top-gallant of good humour at the success of his negotiations, and his mirth was so infectious that all three laughed merrily, without inquiring too carefully why they laughed. Thus it came to pass that the two Lanes, brother and sister, lodged in the same dwelling as their King.

## CHAPTER X

### WHY JANE CAME TO BREDA

**T**HE reason that Colonel Lane gave to his Majesty for his appearance with his sister at Breda was, to the best of his belief, the reason that had moved him to travel. He had told the King that, in his opinion, at a moment when the fortunes of Charles had fallen to their lowest and he was in danger of being abandoned by all his adherents, it was the duty of a loyal subject to hasten to his sovereign's side. Up to that time Colonel Lane had chosen to remain in England, where — as a seemingly private and pacific citizen, and, in fact, an active participant in all the Royalist plots for the Restoration — he had deemed that he could render the best service in his power to the exiled monarch.

Colonel Lane was a simple thinker, one that followed with dogged honesty the obvious course. And the obvious course appeared to him to be, until he learned better, to remain where he was and to continue the work upon which he was engaged. It was his sister who suggested to him the new path which it was his duty to follow; it was his sister who made it clear to him that his presence would be far more useful to the King at Breda than at Bentley. At first the gallant colonel was inclined to argue the matter, but Jane was always convincing, and her influence over her brother was always masterful. Jane insisted, with no show of insistence,

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upon the journey to Breda, so the good colonel packed his valise and portmantles, gathered his cash together, and sailed the seas.

From the beginning of the business Jane had known exactly what she wanted to do, and what she wanted done — a great advantage in all tactical strategy — and because she knew her brother and because she knew herself, her wishes rapidly crystallized into established facts. Ever since her first visit to London, when, in the strictest and most secret circles of Royalist devotion, she had made the acquaintance of Mr. Barstow, she had resolved on the voyage. Mr. Barstow was an accepted and applauded pillar — if the phrase may be used — of the Royalist propaganda, trusted to the topnotch, praised to the limit of lauding vocabulary. Jane saw him, weighed him in the scales of her woman's wit, and appraised him instantly for a knave.

It was no news to her, it was no news to any loyal Royalist, that the secrets of the King over sea were frequently betrayed. Time and again the Government had shown itself to be forewarned and forearmed at the very moment when some especially promising plot erupted into activity. Gallant Cavaliers perished in action, or on the scaffold, because the threads of the conspiracy, so carefully prepared, were in reality twisted securely round the fingers of authority. Jane, in her country quiet, sorrowed for failure after failure. Jane in London believed that the secret of the treason was to be solved in Breda. Thus it was that Colonel Lane was inspired to visit his Majesty, and to take his sister in his company.

The meeting with Challis had rekindled in her mind memories that were not pleasant memories. She was

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indeed aware that Challis was in the immediate service of the King, and the sight of his quiet, handsome face, and his tall form, with its easy courteous carriage, had given no surprise to her.

But it sent her thoughts back to the dreary days after the flight of Charles, when the world seemed very empty and grey and melancholy for the want of the sight of a young man's face and the sound of a young man's voice.

The beauty of Jane Lane had brought her many suitors in the years that followed Worcester. Not only many gallant gentlemen that served their exiled King, but many gallant gentlemen that went for the Parliament and the Commonwealth, and whom, for their so doing, Jane hated very cordially, though she was too just to deny them some merits of courage and honourable conduct. Jane favoured none of her suitors, for she knew that she had given her heart out of her star, and that maidenhood was her chosen portion. But being a very sensible, as well as a very pleasant, young woman, she lived her life blithely, and was willing to be friends with friendly men. When they asked for more than friendship, they learned their mistake; but the lesson was never unkind, and the most of them took it in good part, and always cherished the name of the Lady of Bentley. Challis was, perhaps, of all her suitors, the one that interested her the most at a time when her interest in such things was hardest to arouse. Her curious air of habitual reserve seemed to give a greater value to his wooing. The precision, even the formality, of his habitual bearing gave an air, as it were, of gracious condescension to his manner when he essayed to please a woman.

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It was not difficult for such a man as Challis to read the secret that Jane believed to be hidden in the heart of her heart. His original guess was soon confirmed by patient observation, by a cunning show of sympathy, by ceaseless analysis of every tone of the girl's voice, of her every action when she spoke of the King, or whenever the King was spoken of in her presence. The result of his study was to inflame his desire for the girl. His first wish to win her was now viciously increased by his knowledge that his rival was also his King. Thenceforward, what had been at first a caprice, became an overmastering passion, and he busied himself, with all his skill and all his experience of women, to gain first the confidence of the girl, and thereafter her love.

What Challis essayed to do he generally did well, and he certainly, for a time, succeeded in pleasing Jane Lane. Himself a scholar, as well as a soldier, a man of a wide reading, worthy of the university, which in his time had counted him one of her distinguished sons, he treated the girl, whose beauty attracted him, as if she carried a mind as richly stored as his own, and was his equal in experience of the world. Where others openly praised her and only wearied her by their praises, he indirectly applauded her wit and pleased her with the applause. Without ever thrusting at her the gross sweetness of a compliment, he led her very subtly to understand that he regarded her as a woman very much out of the common way, and the knowledge of this regard made the girl of eighteen think with no little kindness of the man.

Challis was indeed a wary and a crafty wooer, and he laid his snares for the girl's heart with infinite dex-

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terity, and had his patience been equal to his pains, he might have won the game. But there came a time when Jane found reason to distrust the sincerity of the man, and Jane, who was all sincerity herself, could abide none but a sincere man for her friend. Then came the quarrel with Challis—an ugly quarrel, which suddenly, for a moment, showed to her another Challis that she had never suspected, a man with a queer, cold ferocity of lust, which chilled and sickened, if it could not alarm her.

It was only a glimpse that she got, for her disappointed wooer quickly recovered his self-command, and strove with all his skill to efface the effect of the ill-advised revelation. But this he could not do. He could not win back the old liking that Jane had felt for him. She knew now that the carriage of the man was an artificiality, that the real Challis was not the finely-bred, wise and kindly gentleman who had pleased her mind, but another creature that could very well pass for finely-bred, wise and kind, but that was, at the core of him, something very different.

Jane bore her disillusionment with the quiet composure that was characteristic of her strong and resolved nature. She bore it with such tranquillity that it took Challis some little time to learn that the girl was illuminated, and that her liking was transmuted to indifference at the best. Challis knew that the liking had been great, but the girl knew its measure better even than Challis's complacency could gauge. Jane knew that she had given to one man all that she understood when she thought of love. But she knew also, with inflexible recognition of the facts of life, that such love was no more than a piece of dazzling tapestry, woven of

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dream-stuff, to adorn the walls of the Palace of Fancy. The exile and the girl who helped him had said no word and done no deed, in those hours of flight and fear and courage, that had any link with the love-game. They had parted as it was meet that fugitive prince and faithful maid should part, all gratitude from the man, all loyalty from the woman. She had lit a lamp on the altar of her heart and fed its flame with tender thoughts. But being a woman, and sane and healthy, she knew that in her life she might find a companion, a mate, with whom to fulfil the destiny of God's creatures. She had liked Challis well enough, if not to think of him seriously as such an one, at least to consider him a not impossible suitor. And then he made a mistake, and there was an end of him. Jane was always generous, and could be gentle in her judgment of the morality of her neighbours. But Challis had deceived her beyond her forgiveness, and she ceased to consider him a friend. Challis, when he realized his dismissal, hotly desiring the lost object, and raging at his impotence to succeed, guessing the girl's secret, and poisoned by the knowledge, turned, as such natures will turn, to purposes of revenge.

## CHAPTER XI

### LION-HUNTING

**W**HEN Jane and her brother had taken possession of the run of rooms beneath his own apartments that Charles had secured for them from Master Peter Yeoman and were left to themselves by their light-hearted master, they busied themselves for a little while with the travellers' task of unpacking. Colonel Lane had travelled with his man, Jane with her maid; and the brother and sister, being sensible people, aided their servants to make the unfamiliar place wear something of the semblance of a home. The rooms which they were in were better than the King's rooms, inasmuch as they were a storey nearer to the surface of mother earth, and they had been better kept, and presented a less squalid appearance. For all these reasons, Colonel Lane had been urgent in his entreaties that the King would consent to shift his quarters to the lower suite and let him and his sister occupy the upper floor. But Charles was not to be persuaded to change. The comfort of a lady he insisted, in despite of Jane's protest, was of more importance than the housing of an exiled king. At last, as Colonel Lane grew more pressing, he was silenced by Charles with a peremptory refusal that was none the less decisive for being delivered in good-humoured terms and tones.

When their installation was done, and their attendants



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had left them, the brother and sister talked for a while of the conditions of the new life which they were living, of the appearance of the King whom they had crossed the seas to serve, of the tragedy of his condition. Jane said nothing further of her desire to discover the identity of the spy who was betraying the secrets of his master. For the moment she was thinking no more of that; for the moment, though she managed to give answer aptly enough, she was thinking little of the substance of the remarks that her brother made. Her brain was busy with a fire-new scheme, and she was considering it from all the cardinal points while she seemed to be absorbed by the honest colonel's amiable and straightforward discourse. But there came a moment when even the good colonel could not fail to note that, though his sister did indeed make responses of a sort to his comments and questions, it was plain that her mind was not with her words, and that her thoughts were elsewhere. Even if Colonel Lane had not been far too fond of his sister and far too much an admirer of her gifts to resent any seeming indifference of hers to his conversation, he was too equable a man to be touchy about trifles. He waited, therefore, upon his sister's good time to explain herself, and the time duly came.

There came a spell of silence upon the pair, which was suddenly broken by the woman. Looking steadfastly upon her brother, she questioned him.

"Brother of mine," she said, "have you a mind to do the King a proper service?"

Colonel Lane gave back his sister a glance as steady as her own, and his answer was emphatic.

"I am his Majesty's servant in all things to the end

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of ends," he declared. "Why should you ask me such a question, Jane?"

"For no reason at all," Jane answered with a laugh. "Or, at least, for no better reason than just to say something by way of preface to the thing that is in my mind, for, indeed, I know that you are the King's man to the core of your heart."

Colonel Lane looked gratified. It always pleased him to be praised by Jane. He also looked curious, as indeed he was, and Jane replied to the challenge on his face.

"I have a wild bird in my brain," she said whimsically, "that is hatching a mad scheme, the maddest scheme ever dreamable by a mad maid."

She did not look in the least like a mad maid as she spoke. She seemed rather to be very sane and cool and tranquil. Yet her coming words were strange.

"I came here," she said, "to unearth a fox, but there is bigger work to do now. We have got to snare a lion."

Lane stared at his sister with a new wonder in his gaze. That she had some new surprise to spring upon him he could not doubt, even if he had no guess as to her purpose. "What do you mean?" he asked, and looked so astonished that Jane would have laughed at him if she had the leisure.

She came a little nearer to her brother, and spoke in a low voice.

"It may mean the King's glory, but the man that undertakes it risks his life in the game."

She drew back and watched her companion with confident eyes. Lane smiled.

"It is no more than my business to risk my life,"

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he said. "What is it, Jane? What is this madcap plan of yours?"

Jane gave him an approving smile and went on, still in a low voice. "I knew what you would say, brother, and yet I loved to hear you say it. Now this is my scheme. Our great enemy, General Monk, spends certain secret times in a kind of hiding, in Birchington in Kent. That you heard from his Majesty to-day: that I heard awhile ago in London. He does so, it is said, for the purpose of a gallantry that is much at odds with his Puritanical carriage."

Lane shrugged his shoulders. "What if he does?" he asked contemptuously. "All Puritans are hypocrites." In saying that the Colonel spoke his mind and the mind of most men of his cause and calling. But if he despised Monk's hypocrisy, he was curious to learn how it could serve his King. "What," he asked, "has a Puritan's gallivanting to do with your scheme?"

"My scheme is so crazy," Jane answered, "that I scarcely dare give it tongue, even to you. And yet I believe it feasible, therefore I must speak, therefore give ready ear. I know something of this Monk, I have heard what those that are his friends say of him; I believe there is more wisdom in him than the most of us that are his enemies would admit."

"What if there be?" Lane asked impatiently. "What is his wisdom to us, if it only serve to keep our King out of his kingdom, and us out of our due?"

"Wait, brother," Jane answered calmly. "I have taken it into my head that if this Monk and our King could be brought together it would not take long for them to come to an understanding. Over in England our King is misunderstood, misrepresented, maligned.

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But let a shrewd man talk with him, let a shrewd man gauge him, face to face, such a shrewd man as knows how England is distracted, and how blessed would be any effective settlement—and Monk is just such a shrewd man—and the Restoration which we long for, the Restoration in which some of us are beginning to lose faith, might be accomplished in half an hour's talk over a table no bigger than this, here present."

She tapped the table against which she leaned as she spoke, with her finger-tips. Lane smiled. "Will you write a polite invitation to General Monk to come over the water and dine with his Majesty?" he drolled.

Jane was not to be so put down. "I would do so if I thought he would come," she answered, "but I think he would not come." "I think so too," Lane agreed. "But I want him to come none the less," Jane continued, "so I want you to hire a ship, to levy a dozen desperadoes, that shall sail with you to Kent and kidnap this General Monk."

Lane burst into a hearty fit of laughter that rattled among the rafters, long unused to echo such frank hilarity. "Lord, what a lunatic whimsy!" he shouted, when he had laughed his fill at the jest. Then, looking at his sister, and noticing that she did not share his merriment, he suddenly realized that where he had nosed an obvious joke, she was in no such humour. Pulling a grave face, he continued. "Lord, you are in earnest." Even as he spoke he marvelled that his wise sister could be so unwise.

"Dead earnest," Jane answered decisively. "Just think briskly, split the film of formal doings. Monk goes his amorous way unattended, fears nothing, having nothing to fear except, indeed, discovery of his in-

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trigue, though even that might hurt him little in the pass to which England has come. You and yours have but to land there one night, march to Quex Hall, and in a twinkling Monk is in your hands, and with Monk the fortunes of England to lie in the King's hand."

Lane gaped at her. "But if I were to make this essay," he questioned, "what should I do with the devil when I had him in my net?"

"Do with him?" Jane cried. "Why, bring him over here, as I said, to have speech with King Charles and learn his worthiness."

"Vastly fine," Colonel Lane commented a thought sourly. "I take it that it will be no great matter for me to make General Monk my prisoner, if indeed he be a frequenter of Quex, and to kidnap him across the water and tilt him at the feet of the King. But such harsh diplomacy may not mellow his temper, and if, after all our trouble, he declines to negotiate with our master, what then?"

"What then," Jane echoed. "Why, if he be such a fool, then he must take the consequences of his folly. At least you will have him a prisoner for the King to deal with, a rebel in arms captured red-handed as it were. Even if Monk will not negotiate, what will not Monk promise to save his life? What will not Monk promise to get free?"

Lane looked at her in admiration. He had always adored his sister, honoured her manly daring, but here was better than the best. "Jane, Jane, there are the seedlings of strategy in your composition. Your scheme is desperate enough, crazy enough, but I find a kind of genius in it nevertheless, and I will try my hand at it."

## CHAPTER XII

### A CONVERSATION

**T**HERE was unwonted merriment in the King's rooms on the night of the Lanes' arrival. The new-comers were feasted as the King's guests on the ample remains of the royal forage of the morning, and his Majesty was graciously pleased to accept from Colonel Lane the gift of a very considerable quantity of good wine and brandy, as the bottles which Charles had provided had been drained dry before Jane had made her fairy-like appearance. Charles was as high-spirited as a schoolboy in the dawn of a long-desired holiday, and his courtiers, mollified by a dynasty of two full meals, displayed a gaiety which had long been foreign to their natures.

The meal was a merry one. The King could not have been more cheerful if he had been seated in his palace at Whitehall, and his satellites were indefatigable in their efforts to eclipse each other in wit. If they were professed free-livers, if their philosophy of life was epicurean in a sense never dreamed of by Epicurus, they had nevertheless the gentility to offer Jane an honest reverence, first for herself and her beauty, indeed, but next for her glorious service to their King.

It was after supper that chance gave occasion for a meeting between Jane and Challis. All through the little jovial revel Challis had carried himself, as Jane, curiously critical, admitted to herself, admirably. He

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had been as bright and lively as his more gaudy companions; he had faced her gaze with an air of calm approval and tranquil interest; he had been witty, he had been gay. Of all present, after the King's Majesty, he had seemed the most excellent gentleman. Jane, watching him with no show of watchfulness, remembered, with a wistful irony, how she had liked him in the far past years for the very qualities that he now displayed so bravely. She felt again a kind of admiration for his speciousness, his plausibility, his self-control. Even while she remembered the little paper that she held in her possession, she admitted to herself that his manner was still attractive. Almost she might have believed in him, save for past memories.

It was after supper that occasion brought them together. Colonel Lane was narrating to his Majesty, and his Majesty's following, certain facts about the position of affairs in England. Jane, to whom those facts were perfectly familiar, had turned to the open window to taste the fresh air. Immediately Challis detached himself from the others, and quietly came to her side.

It was not without a stir of varied emotions that Jane found herself, after so many days, again looking into the face of Challis and listening to his voice. Though the friendship she had once felt for him had long since perished, the memory of it was inevitably strong upon her in this moment. Challis carried himself with the quiet dignity that seemed native to him; his manner was gravely courteous, his gaze steady. There was no hint of embarrassment in his demeanour as he addressed her with that air of unfeigned pleasure due to an old friend newly met. Jane recognized that he

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looked very handsome and gallant in his well-kept habit; that the passage of time had only lent a new distinction to his fine features and upright figure. She recalled the sense of admiration with which she had first beheld him when she was still in the glory of her girlhood, and she felt that if she were to meet him for the first time now, a like admiration must needs be kindled. She thought of that little ciphered paper safely locked away as she looked at Challis, and she marvelled as she looked. It seemed strange indeed to associate any falseness to one that was blessed with so fair a presence. But Jane knew Challis well, knew something of the spirit that fumed behind that comely mask.

Challis seemed to hesitate for a moment; then he addressed Jane.

"You are a very good friend of the King, Mistress Lane, to travel so far for the sake of his salutation."

He spoke very smoothly, with an easy, good-humoured wonder. Jane looked at him steadily with a faint smile on her face.

"Are not all here good friends to the King?" she asked.

"Surely," Challis agreed.

"Then, if the King has found so many faithful friends to abide with him in Breda, is it any wonder that my brother and I should wish to be of the party?" Jane asked, still smilingly. Challis shook his head.

"I do not wonder. I do but think that his Majesty is happier in having your friendship than in having the allegiance of all others, aye, of all England to boot."

Jane's smile faded from her face, and left her grave.

"I am glad," she said, "that the King does not think so, else I should be sorry I came."



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Challis spoke now with a new note of earnestness in his voice, the earnestness that had gone so far to charm her in the past, and had no power to charm her now.

"If I were the King I should think so," he said, with an air of frank simplicity. Jane smiled at the cunning boldness of the attempt to regain the lost ground of long ago.

"Master Challis," she said, "your admiration is frank, and as it is no doubt intended to gratify, must surely be acceptable as gratifying. Were I a vain Jane I should fancy you hazarded a declaration."

She spoke as coolly as if the thought of such an intention on his part came to her now for the first time. Challis made her a gallant bow.

"You might fancy so much," he said, "and not fail in judgment. Mistress Jane, we were very good friends once, and as I hope and believe, we are very good friends still. In the name of that old and, to me, dear friendship, have I your leave to be plainer?"

Jane lifted a warning hand. She saw that he was employing against her his old arts; the noble straightforwardness, the pensive earnestness, all were there. But now she understood them, and knew what they were worth.

"There is no need, sir," she said, "I take your drift. You wooed me once and you would woo me again. But I am as one with all true women of England that have taken a vow to welcome no wooing till the King shall enjoy his own again."

Challis allowed an eager light to shine in his eyes, and an eager note to animate his voice. Glance and speech alike were intended to exert some of the influence they had once exerted. If glance and speech left Jane wholly

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unmoved, she was resolved as yet to show no hostility to Challis. The man might be honest in his dealings with the King, or he might not. In any case it were well to give him an amiable attention.

"You have given me new cause to long for the Restoration," he said, "if you hold out to me the hope that, when it comes, I may speak my mind and find you willing to hear me. I think you have misunderstood me, misjudged me."

"Let us say no more of past or future till the time we talk of comes," said Jane quietly. "In the present, all we that are the King's friends should have no thoughts but for his triumphant return to England."

"You speak very nobly, and I pray Heaven that the hour may be soon," Challis said fervently, "though I have my fears, which I keep to myself, for I would not dash his Majesty with any show of doubt in his star."

Jane seemed to smile approval.

"You are considerate, sir. The King loves you so well that he might lose heart altogether if he guessed you qualmish. But you that are so devoted to his Majesty, how can you spare any tittle of your devotion for so simple a subject as me?"

Challis spoke with an eagerness unusual in him.

"You have just barred me from speaking my mind, but I hope you will grant me leave to give you some proof of my service."

Jane shook her head.

"He that serves the King best, serves me best," she said, "but I am glad we have had this talk, for indeed, I have need to come to you for counsel."

"Is this indeed so?" Challis asked, and there was an exultation in his voice.

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"As so as so," Jane affirmed decidedly. She paused a moment, as if her thoughts were wandering; then suddenly she faced the secretary and spoke.

"Master Challis," she said, "it must be as plain to you as to any man that the King's enterprises suffer sadly from information given to the enemy."

Challis heard her with an unchanging face, but he watched her closely as he answered.

"It is, indeed, as you say, and very pitiable. Would to Heaven we could find a way to prevent it."

Jane looked very innocent, spoke very innocently.

"It must be someone in the immediate neighbourhood of the King," she said thoughtfully. "You must forgive my importunity, Master Secretary, but a woman's weak wit is sometimes of service to a man's greater wisdom, and I thought that, perhaps, if you and I laid our heads together, we might manage to come at the man."

Challis seemed delighted at the suggestion.

"Would to Heaven that we could, lady," he said warmly. "Give me but these fingers on the villain's throat, and the King would be quit of one enemy for ever."

Jane looked at him with seeming admiration.

"It does my heart good to hear you speak so," she said.

They had no time for further talk, as at this moment Charles, who was evidently eager for a further taste of Jane's company, made an end to his serious speech with her brother. He advanced towards the window whence Challis, with a grave salutation to Jane, withdrew.

"Dear lady," Charles cried, "we have played at statesmen long enough and for the leave of the night I have a mind to be idle."

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"Indeed, Sire," Jane said and smiled, "half the sweetness of even the best business lies in some secret thought of leisure at the end of it, leisure, as it were, to sit at gaze before the work well done and warm one's hands at it."

Charles applauded. "Well said, Jane," he cried. He turned to the others. "Sirs, we have been serious for a while. It is now time to be merry again before we part for the night. I summon each of you, as faithful subjects, to provide some entertainment or diversion for our honoured visitors."

Thus adjured, each of the Cavaliers present made what contribution he could to the mirth of the evening. Kingfisher took up a pack of cards and performed some ingenious tricks with them. Dawlish, who always had a store of riddles and such ingenuities at command, drew upon his resources. His stock was, for the most part, of an unseemly nature, but these, in compliment to the visitor, he eschewed for the occasion, availing himself only of those that might with propriety be presented to the lady's ear. Garlinge and Welcombe, under the direction of Pippet, who was good at such gambols, enacted a charade whose simplicity was atoned for by its spirit of hopeful loyalty.

It was to be in two syllables, so Pippet announced. In the first, Garlinge and Welcombe sat in chairs, while Pippet plastered their faces with some flour that he found in the cupboard. In the second, Garlinge and Welcombe, having wiped their faces, stood one at each end of a piece of rope, with a dividing line traced on the carpet between them, and tugged lustily for the victory, which came in the end to Garlinge. Then the pair advancing towards Charles's chair with an air of

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great solemnity, knelt and respectfully kissed the King's hands. Charles scratched his head and looked puzzled, but Jane applauded and interpreted.

"Is it not Whitehall, sirs?" she asked. "For in the first part you were white, and in the second you did haul, and for the whole you behaved as if you were in the palace of our liege at home."

Pippet, in a rapture, admitted that Mistress Lane had guessed rightly, and for a small jest the matter begot much laughter. But the gift of the night came from Challis when the King commanded him to sing. The secretary commanded a fine voice, and producing a lute from a closet, complied very readily with Charles's wish.

The song that he chose to sing was the exquisite ballad of the Marquis of Montrose to his dear and only love. Challis sang it with great tenderness of feeling and truth of expression, gaining thereby the praise of Colonel Lane, who had musical tastes, and much musical knowledge. As for Jane, she knew very well that though Challis did not for one instant lift his eyes to her face while he sang, nevertheless every word and every note were directed at her heart, and were so many cunningly addressed appeals to her emotions. For he had sung such songs to her in old days, and his voice had not falsened or weakened in the interval. Once its charm was potent, now it could charm no more. But Jane was inwardly very sure that Challis did not believe this.

When Challis had done, and had taken his praises with an air of simple satisfaction, Kingfisher, that had been busy filling glasses for all the party, called for "Here's a Health unto his Majesty," and in an instant all the company were standing before Charles and giving the

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stirring song at the top of their voices — some well, some ill, but all, even the most discontented of the Cavaliers — with enthusiasm and loyalty. Through the open window into the quiet night the faithful challenge floated.

## CHAPTER XIII

### COLONEL LANE SETS TO WORK

**J**ANE LANE always asserted that it was the greatest good fortune in the world to have for a brother such a man as the colonel, and Colonel Lane, for his part, was equally confident that he was rarely favoured in being blessed with such a sister. The pair had always been famous friends. Ever since Jane could remember anything, her comely, kindly, sturdy elder brother had played the first part in her life, and leaving out of count her sweet secret, he played that part still. When she was a little girl and he was a big boy, they began to be companions, and the companionship thrived and strengthened with the moving years. It was popularly believed in the colonel's country that he had remained unwedded because of the difficulty he experienced in satisfying a mind educated to the standard of Jane's merits. It would not do, they understood him to hold, for a man to have a wife that he esteemed and admired less than his sister; it would be putting the woman in an unfair and displeasing position. However that may be, it is certain that any little voyages which the colonel's fancy may have adventured towards the coasts of matrimony ended the one way. He returned from them still a bachelor, still his sister's comrade and servant.

Colonel Lane had not perhaps so nimble a wit as his splendid sister, nor so acute an intuition, but he had all

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her courage and coolness and daring intensified to the manly standard. He was essentially a man of action, and the more difficult the action might be in which he was engaged, the better he liked it. This was why the period of the Wilderness — for so he styled the Protectorate — pleased him so little. He had mighty small sympathy with the lingering plots and intrigues of the Sealed Knot and similar laggard conspiracies, and he regretted very bitterly the days before Worcester, and longed very zealously for a chance to do something definite for his distressed sovereign.

As soon, therefore, as he had fully grasped the suggestion which his sister had made to him, and had realized its vast audacity, he was frankly delighted with the plan, and he was prepared to enter into the scheme with a warm heart, a cool head, and a strong hand. It was to the advantage of Colonel Lane that in his most daring enterprises he was always steady and collected. The excitement of adventure never overheated his enthusiasm to the injury of his discretion; he balanced the warrior with the sage and managed to combine the reckless courage of a Quixote with the calmness of a well-salted campaigner. The enterprise which his sister had proposed so composedly was a difficult one in all regards and might have staggered many a valiant adventurer, but Colonel Lane liked it the better for that fact. While he recognized its amazing audacity and rashness, he knew also that it was not impossible that, given certain conditions, it might be carried out successfully, and that its success might be of inestimable advantage to his King. Therefore, having once admitted the reasonableness of the experiment, he lost no time in making it.

The scheme once broached and the adventure accepted,



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the brother and sister wasted no time in discussion of the details of the enterprise. These Jane left with a confident heart to the colonel's care. She had schemed the scheme; she believed in it; her brother shared her belief: now the business was left to him, under favour of destiny, to accomplish. It was agreed that Colonel Lane should explain his inevitable absence to the King by pleading the exigency of some private business that compelled a journey to Amsterdam. Jane, it was also agreed, should remain in Breda, to cheer by her presence the dreary conditions of the King's life. Neither the brother nor the sister felt the slightest hesitation in making this decision. They knew themselves, and they knew the King.

He needed help for his forlorn hope, but not too much help. Ten or a dozen stout fellows of unquestioned courage and unhesitating obedience, fellows that either had no curiosity or knew effectively how to conceal curiosity, would serve his turn better than a regiment. Such men were in no sense difficult to find. The Low Countries swarmed with gentlemen-adventurers whom the enduring success of the Protectorate had driven from an inhospitable and uncomfortable England. These were ready enough to risk their skins in any enterprise, however headstrong and desperate, which combined loyalty to their exiled sovereign with a chance of lining their lean pockets. Colonel Lane, prudent and alertly observant, resolved to spend a couple of useful days in a visitation of the water-side inns and the gaunt taverns in the by-streets, where decayed gentility might moderately assuage its thirst at a small cost. Since it was his purpose to raise for himself a little troop of rakehells who should prove prepared to do exactly what he needed,

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in exchange for a certain number of gold counters that would mean many always dear but now unfamiliar pleasures to the ragged gallants he hunted, it was fortunate for Colonel Lane that he had the command of a certain amount of money. It was no vast sum, but it would serve to give him an unusual place and power among the shabby gentlefolk he sought, gentlefolk who still swore allegiance to King Charles lustily, but whose active services required, naturally enough, the stimulus of a little lucre.

Colonel Lane saw with his mind's eye the kind of fellows he needed for his business, and he was eager to transform his dream company into figures of flesh and blood. He knew from experience that he was a good judge of men's tempers and mettle, and that while he would never be deceived by the sham valour of some swaggering jack, he would, on the other hand, be quick to discern the stout spirit and stubborn faith that might be housed in some outwardly unpromising body. Mere hireable ruffians were of no use for his purpose. He was not scraping together a pirate's crew; he was engaged in an affair of State, which would require much nicety in the management. It might, therefore, take him some little time to raise his recruits, as they would all have to be picked men, expected to have other qualities than those which would serve to satisfy the judgment of the ordinary recruiting-sergeant. But it was Colonel Lane's theory that you can always find the man you want if you only take the right kind of pains. Colonel Lane's celibate condition seemed to show that this theory did not apply to women.

It was therefore with a cheerful heart and a confident carriage that Colonel Lane, on the day following

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his arrival at Breda, made his way to the street to begin his adventure. He paused for a moment on the doorstep to take the morning. The day was bright and clear; the sky was very white and very blue; sunlight converted the road into a golden highway to the Land East of the Sun, West of the Moon, and a little kissing spring wind babbled promises. Colonel Lane snuffed the sweet air and was pleased. A man's business must be followed whether the weather be fair or foul, but Colonel Lane had still so much of the essential essence of youth in his composition as to delight in the colour and kindness of the day. He drew a full breath of satisfaction, accepted the sunlight as a fine augury of fortune, and stepped briskly forward to fulfil his purpose.

Colonel Lane aimed little at being the gallant, and was never the squire of dames, but had he chosen to seek their laurels it is likely his overtures would have found welcome. Certainly, as he now strode along the street, many a maid and matron looked with approval at the stalwart stranger with the pleasant face. Simple women, such as those good citizens of Breda, were always attracted by Colonel Lane; their nature instinctively recognizing and appreciating the simplicity and straightforwardness of his.

The good colonel had been for no great while an inhabitant of Breda, but already in that short space of time he had gone far to make himself acquainted with the peculiarities and particularities of the town. Master Peter Yeoman, dexterously questioned, had told him a good deal — for it was the colonel's custom always, on entering a strange town, wherever it might be, to learn from the first to hand as much as possible of its ways

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and wonders. He already felt like an old inhabitant of Breda and moved through its streets with ease. He had gained the lie of the land in the first minutes that succeeded his arrival, and he now made for his destination with the easy certainty of a citizen. Where there is a canal, the colonel argued sagaciously, there are water-side inns: where there are water-side inns, those hostelrys are sure to hive all manner of blithe adventurers: a man in search of gallant rascals will have but to look about him with nimble wits to find the cattle he covets. It was in this justifiable mood of confidence that Colonel Lane sniffed an air grown salter as he found himself threading the last of the streets that led to the busy centre of Breda, and wondered what his luck would proffer him in his search for stout flesh and high hearts.

As Colonel Lane emerged on to the main street his ears were assailed by an excruciating discord, which, in the first shock, he was tempted to attribute to a battle-royal between antagonistic cats. On looking about him, however — for he was a humane man and would have made to separate the combatants — he discovered that the cacophony proceeded from another cause. There was a large cask or hogshead standing upright in a quiet corner of the canal-side. On the cask a young man was seated with an open book on his knees, and the young man was vigorously handling a fiddle and bow. "Handling" was indeed the word that Colonel Lane applied to the young man's action, for it would have been the very madness of flattery to suggest that the young man was playing on his instrument. Colonel Lane, who loved the arts, and was something of a musician, paused in astonishment to listen to the horrible

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noises which the man upon the cask extracted from his cat-gut. Such passers-by as there were did not appear to share the colonel's interest or surprise, but went their way for the most part as if nothing untoward were happening. If they did not heed the young man, the young man, for his part, did not heed them, but scraped steadily away, sawing at his strings with a patience and a pertinacity that had no other result than the production of a most damnable rasping, whose likeness to caterwauling had in the beginning deceived Colonel Lane. The good colonel, amazed and fascinated by the extravagant atrocity of the performance, moved towards the cask to get a closer view of the anti-musician that was enthroned thereon. He saw, on this nearer scrutiny, that the fiddler was a young man in the neighbourhood of five and twenty years whom the colonel guessed to be a fellow-countryman. His general appearance was pleasing enough. He had curly red hair and a merry red face, and his sturdy body was gaily habited in a suit of green and yellow. By this time he was conscious of the colonel's presence and the colonel's interest, and, pausing in his exertions, which appeared to heat him a good deal, he stared good-humouredly at his unexpected audience. Colonel Lane noticed that the fiddler's eyes were of a pale, bright blue, that seemed even paler and brighter than they were in consequence of the ruddiness of the countenance they adorned. Colonel Lane felt that their gaze was amiably inquiring what the devil he did to stand there and gape, so the colonel prepared to answer one question with another.

"May I ask, sir," he said politely, hazarding the question in English, "why you sit there and—" he

## A HEALTH UNTO HIS MAJESTY

was going to add "make that hideous din," but thought kinder of it, and concluded, "do what you are doing?"

The young man laughed heartily. When he had made an end of laughing he said, in a round, English voice, "I take it that you have found no great satisfaction in my labours."

The colonel admitted that this was so, and continued that he was wishful, without offence, to be enlightened as to his purpose.

"My purpose," replied the young man cheerfully, "my purpose is very simple. I wish to learn to play the fiddle."

The colonel did not rightly understand how that end, however desirable and honourable in itself, was much to be furthered by the antics and scrapings of the man on the cask.

"You do not seem to me," he said, smiling, "to have made much progress up to this present."

"I frankly admit it," said the man in green and yellow as cheerfully as before. "I venture the conjecture," he continued, looking curiously at the colonel, "that you have some acquaintance with the art of music."

"A very little," answered the colonel modestly. "Enough to gain me a great deal of pleasure."

"And sometimes a great deal of pain," the fiddler suggested playfully. "Well, sir, to be open with you, I must candidly confess that I know nothing whatever of music."

Colonel Lane could not be other than enchanted at the brisk and delightful inconsequence of the young fellow's reply. He fell at once into a hearty fit of laughing, which seemed to give no offence to the fiddler. On the contrary, he joined affably in the laughter of

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which he was the cause and seemed to consider the whole business the best joke in the world.

When Colonel Lane felt that any further exhibition of hilarity would be, if not unpermissible, at least unseemly — though, indeed, Master Green-and-Yellow showed no sign of diminishing mirth — he smoothed his face, tempered his jolly gusts, and aired his inquisitiveness anew.

“You must forgive me,” he began, “if I seem to question unduly, but indeed I am fulfilled with a curiosity which your former show of courtesy tempts me to believe you will be willing to appease.”

The young man grinned, and nodded his head. “If you ask me a bellyful of questions I shall be ready with a bellyful of answers.”

“Why, then,” continued Colonel Lane, “if you are, as you say, entirely ignorant of music, and I certainly see no reason to question your modesty, why is it that you sit here thus in the open air and torture an honest fiddle — to say nothing of the ears of the passers-by? Though, indeed, I note,” the colonel continued before his question had time to cool, “that none of them seem to take any notice of your vagaries.”

“As to what you have just said,” the fiddler responded, “I will admit that when I began upon these exercises some few days ago, I attracted no small degree of attention from the pedestrians. But when they found, in the first place, that I was an Englishman, and therefore presumably mad; in the second place, that I attempted no tax upon their charity; in the third place, that I was indifferent to their observation; and in the fourth place — this they learned from experience — that I renewed my studies day in and day out, why they speedily

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got used to me, and now they take me as much for granted as any other familiar of the place. It does not take long, I promise you, to exhaust the curiosity of the good people of Breda."

The colonel again thanked him for his politeness. "But my curiosity is not exhausted," he persisted. "Permit me to remind you that you have not yet answered my question."

The young man leaped nimbly off the cask, thrust his fiddle and bow into a bag that was parti-coloured like his habit, and stood erect facing his questioner. Colonel Lane, that had liked him all along, liked him now better than ever, for he stood a good height, though he had not all the colonel's inches, and was sturdily built and carried himself squarely. "Here is a sprin-gald," the colonel thought, "that should be a soldier."

"Unknown sir," the man in green and yellow began, "You have asked me a question which perhaps I can answer best by asking you another question. What caused Mark Antony to lose a third of the world? What urged Dame Sappho of Lesbos to pitch herself into the tumbling sea? What tempted David, King of Israel, to deal dishonourably with Uriah, that had a pretty wife? I could amplify my catalogue until nightfall—but no more."

"Why, sir," replied the colonel, smiling at the whimsicality of his companion, "the force that moved each of the individuals you have cited was, as I take it, the passion of love, manifesting itself in one form or another."

"You are very much in the right of it," answered the parti-coloured man with alacrity. "And it is that same passion of love which has driven me to this frisky fiddling, and would, I will dare swear, drive you to



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a like degree of inconsequence if you did but know the fair one who is the cause of my conduct."

Colonel Lane shook his head gravely, though his eyes danced. "I am no very inflammable matter," he began, and would have said more, but the other did not give him time.

"Were you as fire-proof as asbestos, or colder than the Hyperborean snow," he protested, "I cannot believe but that you would be illuminated and thawed by the delicious imp who has brought me to this pass."

Colonel Lane was much entertained by the vehemence of the youth. "You speak with the fervour of a true knight-errant," he declared, "and it is therefore only meet that you should perfect your chivalrous assumption by proclaiming to the city and to the world the name of your incomparable nature. Such, I need scarcely assure you, was the course of all the errant gentry, from Amadis of Gaul to Don Quixote of La Mancha."

The other laughed a jolly laugh. "You are a good fellow," he said, "and I relish your humour. Indeed, I make no secret of my service. But I take it that you must be new to the good city of Breda to be in any doubt upon the matter."

The colonel admitted that he had indeed arrived in Breda for the first time on the preceding day. The fiddler wagged his head and looked wise.

"That explains it," he said. "Had you dwelt here longer, you could not fail to hear on every hand of the havoc wrought on the hearts and the minds of all sorts and conditions of men, young and old, rich and poor, gentle and simple, by the cruel beauty and beautiful cruelty of Mistress Willemyn Yeoman."

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The colonel gave a long, low whistle of surprise. "I know Master Peter Yeoman," he said. "Is this girl his maid?"

The green-and-yellow youth nodded vigorously, and his ruddy cheeks burned to a duskier purple, as the conversation conjured up before him the image of his dear. "That is the lass," he said, "and there is no lovelier nor no naughtier baggage under the canopy of Heaven."

"You speak in mingled terms, young sir," commented the colonel. "You deal praise and blame in the same breath. Can a fair that kindles such devotion call for so much condemnation?"

"That she can, by Gog," cried the lover hotly. "She is the most perverse minx that ever wore shift, and those that love her she plagues with devilish inventions. You have noted my strange behaviour, how I sit on this cask and fiddle, though I have no more ear for music than yonder butt. Why do I do so? you ask, and I answer, to please Mistress Willemyn."

"You interest me, and you perplex me," said the colonel. "Pray you explain."

"It is in this wise," said the fiddler eagerly, for he seemed to find a kind of pleasure in telling his tale. "When this beautiful shrew finds out that a man is sweet on her, she so eggs him on with shynesses, and so tempts him with slynesses, she so allures him, and teazes him, and cajoles him, and provokes him, that there is no help for him, but he must spit out his love-sickness, make a clean breast of his frenzy, and mew, whine, bleat, bellow or roar his adoration, according to the strength of his lungs and gullet. Then the mischief begins."

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The colonel was hugely amused. "Why, what happens then," he questioned, "that makes you so rail upon the maid?"

"She professes, the sham simpleton, to be mightily amazed," the young man answered, "and after much mopping and mowing, she protests that she will never entertain the thought of a man who could not do something or other which she knows very well that her poor suitor is little qualified to do."

"So, so," said the colonel, nodding his head sagaciously, "I think I begin to understand."

"Now for my poor part," the young man continued, vexation and despair comically blended in his voice, "I never had the smallest aptitude in matters musical. I am, I thank God, as loyal a man as lives, but I could never distinguish sufficiently between such tunes as 'Here's a Health unto his Majesty' and, say, 'When the King shall enjoy his own again,' as to be able to join in the chorus without dumfounding disturbance to the others. If, when I was a lad, I ventured to uplift my voice in a hymn at church, my temerity surely ended in my being led forth by the beadle. When Mistress Willemyn, who has, she tells me, a mighty sweet voice, sits and plays at the virginals, I rejoice to look upon her, for she makes a most pleasing picture, but as to what she is doing, or why she does it, I have no more understanding than Adam had of algebra."

"Indeed," said the colonel dryly, as the young man paused to take breath, "you seem to me, for one that would play the fiddle, to be in a parlous case."

"May all fiddles be damned, with the man that first made one," the youth ejaculated piously, "for they are the means of my discomfiture. Mistress Willemyn, when

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I came to state my case, knowing well what she is pleased to consider my infirmity — though I hold it no such thing — made wicked resolve to play upon it. So while she half seemed to confess that, one way or another, she liked me well enough, she declared that she could never so much as consider a man that could not play the fiddle to perfection. Now, in saying this, she no doubt hoped to be surely shut of me, thinking, maybe, that I would, considering my blissful ignorance of fiddles and fiddlestrings and fiddlesticks, take my dismissal tamely, or that if I followed the example of others, and sought to carry out her wishes, I would soon weary of the business and give in. But I tell you, she did not know her man."

"So I should imagine," the colonel said with much approval in his voice. The young man gave him a grateful glance, and continued:

"I stoutened my spirit," he said, "with the old adage which says that what man has done, man can do. There must have been someone at some point in the story of this droll world, that was the first to learn to play the fiddle, and I was in no worse case than he, save in this, perhaps, that he, possibly, and indeed probably, had an ear for music."

"That makes a considerable difference," the colonel observed sententiously. The young lover seemed inclined to argue the point.

"May be so, and may be no," he responded. "Anyways, I was determined to have a shot at the butt. I was not going to knuckle under to a shape of painted wood and a row of cat-guts. I have very few pennies to spend, and I need those few to keep me in bread and cheese, but I pawned my seal-ring, which fattened my

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purse a little, and I was lucky enough, after a deal of chaffering, to purchase a fiddle from a drunken sailor in a tavern."

"To possess a fiddle," said the colonel solemnly, "is certainly a decided step in the direction of learning to play it, but still it is only a step. What were your next measures?"

"Why," answered the would-be musician, "I cannot afford to pay for lessons, but I have a slight acquaintance with the organist of the Church of St. Hrosvitha yonder, and he lent me this manual of the art, and now and then of a morning starts me well with my instrument in tune. Whereafter I scrape away lustily, as you have seen and heard."

"I have indeed," the colonel agreed with a shiver. "And do you think that by this method you may in time attain to a mastery over the fiddle?"

"That is as God wills," the young man replied doggedly, "but at least I am determined to do my best."

The colonel smiled at the young man's pertinacity.

"Was it," he asked, "part and parcel of your young empress's purpose that you should practise your art on the public quays and throned upon a cask?"

The young man shook his head, and the look of set resolve upon his rubicund countenance shifted to the more familiar grin.

"No," he responded, "that was of my own doing. All Mistress Willemyn commanded was that I should learn the fiddle if I would win the right to walk in her train. Now I lodge in a cock-loft, that may serve the turn to sleep in, but no more. I love the open air, fair or foul, rain or shine, and will never be indoors when I can help it, save, indeed, in a tavern of good

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company, such as 'The Long Leopard,' where good wine is to be had with good wit, the one reasonably enough for the paying, and the other gratis for the hearing. Diogenes of old chose to sit in a tub and rail at humanity. I sit on one and make music, and am, as I think, the finer philosopher."

"I grant you so much," said the colonel. "Do I understand from what you said but now that there are others whom Mistress Willemyn Yeoman has plagued as strangely as you?"

"Indeed there be," the fiddler answered gaily, as one that was not ill-pleased to have companions in mischance. "There is Master Luke East, as good a fellow for sports as ever lived, but a bit of a dullard and one that loathes books, and him she has set to learn Greek, and will not be friends with him until he has mastered it, which will be to-morrow come never, as I think. And there is the Frenchman, Jean-Marie Goupillot, that is ever sick on salt-water, whom she has ordained to win a master-mariner's certificate, or lose her favour, and the honest Fleming, Piet van Poop, that is a man of peace, and him she has doomed to gain perfection in fencing, and to approach her next with a prize from Provost Chavignac's academy. But I think they are all of my mind, and will fight contrariety. For my part, I continue to fiddle."

Colonel Lane found himself mightily taken with the young gentleman's plain-spoken, straightforward, fantastic narrative. "Here, surely," he said to himself, "is a youngster of the very spirit that I need. Here is a fellow to press, if he be pressible, into my enterprise."

Considering thus, the colonel regarded the green-and-yellow fiddler very steadfastly for a few seconds, during

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which he found that his regard was answered by a gaze no less steady than his own. Thereafter the colonel spoke.

"My young friend," he said, "if you will forgive me for so addressing you, seeing that I can do no less than consider you with a very friendly feeling, after our immediate conversation, my young friend"—here the colonel paused for an instant, before delivering his volley—"I believe that you are the very man for my money."

At the mention of the word "money" boy green-and-yellow pricked up his ears, as it were, and his blue eyes danced lively as he moved a little nearer to his companion.

"I hope," he said, "that when you talk of money, you talk bluntly, and not in a parable. If you have money to spend, and are willing to spend it on me, tell me what you want of me, in God's name, and if the thing is doable, I will try to do it. You can see for yourself that I have no lack of enterprise, and am little daunted by difficulties."

Colonel Lane smiled at the young man's ardour, and congratulated himself on the young man's penury. Surely, he argued with himself, a man that is tone-deaf, and yet, being aware of this shackle, essays to learn to play the fiddle, would be the very fellow for a forlorn hope. And if, as it seemed, the green-and-yellow gentleman had friends of like temper with himself, like inclination to attempt the well-nigh impossible, and a like stimulus of lack of silver, why, it seemed as if a portion of his needed muster was found ready to his hand. Impelled by the cogency of his reasoning, he addressed the fiddler.

"To be frank with you," said the colonel, "I am in-

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deed at this instant engaged in beating up recruits for a very difficult and secret enterprise. So difficult is it that I warn you that if you engage in it, and it come to fail, you have every chance of ending your days. So secret is it, that if you enter into it, you must enter under sealed orders, as it were, knowing nothing of my purposes, and giving me an unquestioning, unhesitating obedience. All I can concede to your curiosity is that if the enterprise prove successful, it will be to the advantage of our beloved King."

"Say no more on that," cried the young man, with alacrity. "I am as good a king's man as any Cavalier, in or out of England, and would gladly strike a blow for him gratis, if occasion did but serve."

"Your sentiments," said Colonel Lane approvingly, "do you credit. I am glad to think there are many like you, but certainly the more the merrier."

"But, listen," the young man continued. "I am in sore straits for lack of pence, and if you have pennies to spend, why, I am your man, so be it that you give me enough of them."

"I think," replied the colonel, "that I can settle that matter to your satisfaction. But we have talked till now of many things, and yet know nothing of each other. Let me present myself. I am Colonel John Lane, of Bentley, in England, very much at your service."

As he spoke, the colonel removed his hat, and made his companion a very ceremonious salutation. The other did the like as profoundly as the colonel, and then delivered himself.

"My name," he said, "is Geoffrey Gascoyne, of Margate, in Kent. I come of honest country stock, and have had my adventures. But my history will keep warm for



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another occasion. My immediate desire is to know what you would have of me, and what you will pay me, for if I had a little money in poke, I could afford to treat myself to some proper music-lessons."

The colonel beamed a good-humoured approval of the young fellow's simple-hearted earnestness and perseverance in his love-affair.

"You are a jolly companion," he said, "and should make a stout soldier, for it is a soldier you will be, if you make one of my commando." He laughed pleasantly for a moment. "Colonel Lane's Own Regiment, we will call it," he continued. "Come, Master Gascoyne, are you willing to serve under Colonel Lane?"

"Magog," replied the young fellow fervently, "I am as willing as a pig is to make pork. Slip a shilling between my fingers, and make me your man, for I swear I am ready to follow you."

"In that case," said Colonel Lane, "there are two things that we should do immediately. In the first place, we should lift a glass together, in honour of our new comradeship, and in the second place, we should set about discovering if some of those love-laden friends of yours, that are so plagued by Mistress Willemyn, would be willing to take a share in my adventure."

"We can kill the two birds with one stone," replied the fiddler gaily, as he made ready to depart from the scene of his discords. "If you will drink at the 'Long Leopard' you will drink the best wine to be found in any tavern in Breda, and if you will drink at the 'Long Leopard' you will be as likely as not to find the good fellows you are seeking, whining, dining, repining, wine-ing, all at one time under its compassionate tiles."

Colonel Lane clapped his new recruit heartily on the

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shoulder. "Let us go to the 'Long Leopard' by all means," he assented. "I like the name, for it recalls our royal standard, and I take the omen as propitious."

Thus speaking, he slipped his arm in that of Gascoyne, and accepting his guidance, directed him to show the way. Master Gascoyne obeyed, and the pair proceeded at a brisk pace along the quays, engaged as they went in profitable conversation.

## CHAPTER XIV

### THE CIPHER

**W**HILE Colonel Lane was busying himself with the King's business abroad, his sister was no less busy in the same cause at home. She was determined to pick the lock of the secret cipher, to pluck out the heart of its mystery, and after the departure of Colonel Lane, she set herself resolutely to the task. She took the piece of paper from its hiding-place and regarded it thoughtfully. Jane, like most of those that had devoted themselves to the service of the exiled king, had familiarized herself with the use and knowledge of many forms of cipher-writing. Cipher-writing was of necessity frequently employed by those at home who wished to communicate in safety with their king or his ministers, and by those abroad, in their letters to the adherents and friends of the cause in England. The most of these used the cipher that had been employed by his late Majesty the martyr-king, and even had, according to some, been invented by him, while others attributed the invention to my lord Worcester. This cipher consisted of an ingenious arrangement of numerals in the place of letters, the adjustment of figures to alphabet being mutually agreed upon between the correspondents.

Jane faced the puzzling page with knitted brows that gave a quaint air of age and prudence to her youthful and ardent countenance. She felt sure that behind that

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seemingly meaningless huddle of letters, with their apparently foolish air of repetition, there lay a meaning which it was essential that she, for the King's sake, should learn. The riddle could be read, for undoubtedly it was a riddle; no one would cover a sheet of paper with such characters to no purpose; the riddle could be read, and she was resolved to read it. Steadfastly she stared at the written page and weighed consideration. She remembered how once she had met a gentleman who had travelled in Egypt, and who told her how the temples and images of the ancient faith of that country were covered with inscriptions cut in symbols that no living man could now interpret. She remembered the staggering sense of helplessness that she had felt at the thought of the history of a nation being inscribed in those illegible archives that defied the curiosity of man, patently proclaiming innumerable facts, yet making the proclamation as vain as if it were invisible. What she remembered to have felt then about the lost speech of Egypt she now experienced anew in the presence of this mocking, tantalizing cipher.

The written page on which Jane was riveting her wit was covered with regularly and neatly written lines of characters in an obviously feigned hand evidently intended to resemble the printing of an Aldine book. But the characters that made up the writing were only two, the letter "e" and the letter "g," and these seemed at the first glance to have been scattered over the paper higgledy-piggledy, as carelessly and meaninglessly as if they had been rained from a pepper-box. Moreover, there was no division or interruption between the confused succession of "e's" and "g's" except at the points where one line of these whimsically mingled letters ended and

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another line began. Save for this, the confused welter of the two letters ran steadily on, as idle in their apparent insignificance as if they had been traced by the careless hand of a child.

Jane had instantly noted that there was no formal alternation of the two letters. It appeared, at the first glance, as if the writer had traced his "e's" and his "g's" just as he pleased at the instant of writing. Sometimes there would come a sequence of several "e's"; in other places there would be a string of as many "g's"; while elsewhere in the manuscript the "e" and the "g" did for a while alternate symmetrically. In its vague eccentricity it would certainly have seemed a most unmeaning business to any one unskilled in the study of cipher problems.

But Jane was not so unskilled. Ever since a tall, gaunt, comely youth, whom she knew to be her lawful God-appointed King, but who showed himself a brave, merry, high-spirited comrade, who wore his heart upon his sleeve and, also metaphorically, carried a battered crown in his pocket, had ridden by her side through the Valley of the Shadow, she had proved a changed maid. She was sure in her heart, that if Will Jackson had been no other than one of her country-side co-mates, she would have prized him higher than she had ever prized man. But also he was her sovereign, the son of the noble, glorious martyr who had died so great a death at Whitehall; he was himself almost a martyr, wandering in a wilderness that once was England, where devils quoted Scripture for their own ends. When the last was seen of Will Jackson, when nothing remained of their ride together but an exquisite, terrible memory, Jane made, almost unconsciously, a great resolve. As girls

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in ancient days dedicated themselves to the service of Artemis and lived sweet, clean lives amid the fellowship of the virgin, the huntress; as girls of her own time and of her own age gave themselves to the service of the church of Rome, so Jane laid, as it were, her heart upon the altar of an exiled boy. She did not admit, for she did not know, that she was in love with Charles Stuart, but she knew that she meant to serve him as long as he lived, or as long as she lived, with all the strength of her body and her soul.

Thereafter her one purpose was, so to enrich, so to equip her mind that, if fate gave her occasion, she might prove of use to the King. She learned tongues, practised the arts, studied grave matters of policy in grave folios — it was a sight for a poet to see her fair face poised over the pages of some great treatise on Statecraft or War — she followed with a fierce closeness all the events that thronged the ten years after Worcester, the ten years that turned her from a raw girl to a ripe woman, the ten years in which England, to her, as to all who thought like her, groaned under the rule of a murderous usurper. Now, in the course of those ten years, she, being well versed in Latinity, had read a book by my lord Verulam — that is better known as Francis Bacon — which is entitled "*De Augmentis Scientiarum*." Now her busily working brain recalled that in this book my lord Verulam wrote much touching ciphers, and boldly propounded a cunning cipher of his own which was based entirely on permutations and rearrangements of the first two letters of the alphabet, "a" and "b." Each of these combinations was to represent, by groups of five letters composed of "a" and "b," a single letter of the com-

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mon alphabet. Here before her lay, possibly and even probably, an application of the Baconian principle. She remembered now that my lord Bacon, while admitting that his system called for an understanding between the parties employing the cipher as to the combinations of the two letters "a" and "b" agreed upon, insisted that it was defiantly undecipherable by any third party unacquainted with the clue.

Now Jane was very confident that any cipher could be solved with patience that was based upon the establishment of any arrangement of symbols, however complicated, in which the symbols corresponded with the letters of the alphabet, so long as the cipher message was long enough to enable the student to establish certain necessary facts. The mere fact that the symbol for each individual letter of the alphabet, instead of being a single letter or figure, was composed of five letters or figures made, she believed, no serious difference to the patient seeker who had ample time to seek. She wondered if the cipher before her, which seemed so like Lord Bacon's, was, like Lord Bacon's, founded upon the principle of five letters to one. The manuscript, on the face of it, was undivided, and offered no answer to Jane's question, but Jane began, undaunted, to look for an answer. Carefully she counted the whole number of the bewildering confusion of "e's" and "g's" which made up the mystery. She found that they amounted to an even number that could only be divided by five or ten, or the divisions of multiples of five or ten. Her pulses throbbed hopefully. Here was what seemed like strong support of her theory that the cryptogram before her was essentially identical with that of Lord Verulam. If it were, she

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would begin by assuming that the writer had taken, like Lord Verulam, five letters for the symbol of one letter, and see what she would learn from that.

Very carefully Jane made a copy of the original document, going over her copy many times to make sure of its exactitude. Then she put the original away in its place of safety, and drew on her copy a short, thick line with her pen at the end of every five letters of the cipher. When she had done this she counted the number of sets of five letters thus obtained, and recorded their number. If she was right in her conjecture, each separate set of five letters, each of which was composed of a combination of "e" and "g," represented a single letter in the missive whose meaning she was seeking to find out. Patiently, now, Jane copied out each of these sets of five letters on separate small slips of paper and arranged them in their order according to the writing on the table before her. There she surveyed them long and thoughtfully. Would she, she wondered, be able, with infinite pains, to assign to each group of five letters its proper value as a letter of the alphabet? Were the words of the message sufficiently numerous to afford her any reasonable hope of doing this by the usual process of deduction familiar to those that are practised in deciphering? She could only trust that they were, and proceed to apply to them the necessary tests. She knew very well that it would prove a long and difficult task.

Jane had made but so much progress, which, indeed, was very little better than no progress, with her self-appointed task, when she was interrupted by the sound of a knock at the outer door of the apartment, which was swiftly followed by the appearance of her maid with the announcement that my lord Ettington desired the



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honour of being allowed to wait upon her. Jane had hurriedly huddled her papers into a drawer the moment she had heard the knock, so she declared her willingness instantly to receive her visitor.

In another moment Lord Ettington presented himself. He was still obliged, by the stern law of necessity, to wear the same stained and faded garments which had clothed him on the previous day, but it was evident to Jane's keen observation that he had expended a world of pains upon the effort to make them appear as neat and spruce as possible. The use of soap and water, the aid of needle and thread, had done something towards such a furbishing up of the unfortunate vestments as was possible under the circumstances to their unassisted owner. Ettington carried himself as jauntily as if he bore a prince's ransom upon his back and was as gay and debonair as if, instead of coming from one floor to another floor of a haggard tenement in Breda, he were crossing from his lodgings in St. James's to wait upon the ladies at Whitehall.

My lord Ettington, gracious salutations being given and returned, announced that he came, an ambassador from his Majesty, with the request that Mistress Lane would allow his Majesty to have the honour of waiting upon her. To this, of course, Jane had but the one answer, that she was proud beyond phrase to have the privilege of welcoming her sovereign to her apartment. Ettington delivered his message with no more an air of innuendo in the delivery than Jane had in the receiving of it. His Puritan critics considered Lord Ettington graceless beyond redemption, but it is well to remember that his Puritan critics were as little capable of understanding him as he was capable of understanding them.

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With a warm heart and a hot head, a loose tongue and a wanton wit, Ettington also possessed a certain direct simplicity in the recognition of life which enabled him in an instant to admit that there were women in the world other than the women in whose company he preferred to live and to recognize that Jane Lane was one of these women.

The brave Lady of Bentley, who had helped to save the King, was a heroine of too high a standing to be judged by the measure of his habitual cynicism. Nay, more, had Jane been other than she was, or ever could be, had he found her of a coming-on disposition and a provocative challenger, it is probable that, for all his theoretical and practical licentiousness, he would have denied allurements out of respect to a loyal and lovable tradition. My lord Ettington, in common with the millions of his fellow men who were then sucking in and sighing out their breaths, for the most part foolishly enough, was favoured with no prophetic power, and would have smiled, likely enough, if it had been assured to him that he would make what is called a good end, and would leave a world that had been to him the theatre of so many brilliant diversions in a state of mind that supplicated pardon, and fervently coveted forgiveness. To be so assured would have surprised him — as, perhaps, at last it did surprise him — but it did not surprise him in the least to believe that Jane Lane was an honest woman, and to act towards her as he would have wished that another should act towards his, Ettington's, sister. He knew enough of women to know that Jane Lane was never a woman of whom a king's mistress is well made, and he was certain sure that Charles, in his wish for Jane's company, had no hidden thought in his mind.

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Therefore, my lord Ettington delivered his message with ease, and Jane Lane received the message no less easily.

Then my lord Ettington kissed the hand of Mistress Jane Lane in the true manner of the Louvre, where he had spent much time to more advantage, and Mistress Jane Lane, her hand being liberated, delivered him a formal and flowing curtsey. If Jane had something of a masculine mind in its daring and decision, if Jane had something of a masculine body, in its vigour and indifference to fatigue, she was not for this in the least degree disenthralled from the gracious conventions of gentlewomen. Physical strength did no more make her awkward than mental agility rendered her harsh, and she was as dainty in her worldly ways and as delicious in her interpretation of worldly customs as if she had known no other school than a Court, and breathed none other than a courtly atmosphere. Lord Ettington was frankly enchanted with the suavity of her salutation, the gracious poise and rest and rise of her body. Vague thoughts, vague phrases, to be fashioned hereafter into verses, floated through his mind. He conceived an original simile of a swan which delighted him. Half he had a mind to beg pen and paper, and record his rose-coloured conceits ere they faded. But, remembering that his Majesty was awaiting his return, and observing that Jane was now regarding him with a certain grave curiosity, he thought better of it and took his leave.

## CHAPTER XV

### THE "LONG LEOPARD"

THE "Long Leopard" was a tavern with a character of its own. All taverns should be in like case, but all are not so favoured. There be some that, misusing or ignoring their opportunities, are deservedly disdained of gods and men. They are dull, they are colourless, they are uncomfortable; their wine runs red to no purpose. A wise man or a witty, if he found himself in one of these ill-favoured places and did not instantly quit, might very likely drink himself drunk, not, indeed, to forget his cares, but to forget that he was, for the moment, housed in so dreary a domicile. Happily the majority of taverns have their special charm, their individual characteristics, their peculiar reputation; this one for the ripeness of its wine, that one for the jolliness of its host; another for the nature of its frequenters, and yet another for some antique image, picturesque legend, whimsical custom, or historical association. These are the taverns that are taverns, hallowed spots where a man may drink wit with his wine and smoke thought with his tobacco; taverns where conversation is a largesse of jewels, and where meditation opens to the waker the gates of Ivory and Horn, and makes him free of the kingdom of dreams.

Among such good and honourable wine-houses the "Long Leopard," to him that, ripened by travel, could discriminate with precision between one delectable tav-

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ern and another delectable tavern, stood boldly with the best. It was the property, as a matter of fact, of Master Peter Yeoman, who threw with a wide net in his purchases of house-property, but it passed in the public eye for the hostelry of Mynheer Zwink, who made an excellent figure-head. Since Peter Yeoman became a civic dignitary of high standing, he seldom had the leisure to visit a tavern, but if occasion urged him to such a visit, for the entertainment of some stranger, or the division of a bottle with a magisterial crony, the "Long Leopard" was the place to which he went. Hence his insistence upon a high standard of excellence for the wines that the "Long Leopard" provided, and hence again the reputation that the "Long Leopard" enjoyed with those that had palates, heads, and stomachs for good liquor. There were no juices in its vats, no cordials in its kegs, that were other than sound and ripe and mellow. Liquid jewels ran clear from the necks of the "Long Leopard's" bottles: splendid springs and burning summers and clustered autumns would seem to have worked for no other purpose than to glorify, with sealed phials of quintessential fires, the "Long Leopard's" cellars.

For the rest, the common-room of the "Long Leopard" was as companionable a haunt, as welcome a shelter, as desirable a tryst, as any good fellow, philosophic toper, or curious student of Bacchics, could covet. It was a large, low room, wood-panelled every way, wood-floored, wood-ceilinged. The full, smooth colour of an oak that had been matured by the heads and shoulders of many generations was lightened here and there by long, low windows, whose crimson curtains, whether drawn at day-time or closed at night-time, stained the sombre glory of the room with red splashes symbolic of

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the wine of life, the fire of life. Its value was heightened by the presence of great dressers loaded with noble pewter, chargers and beakers, cups and mugs and pipkins, all gleaming with that incomparable glow which mocks the boasted power of silver. Men came, of course, to the "Long Leopard" that had no glimmer of wit in their composition, and these, of course, departed as they came, tickled, indeed, by a kind of unconscious exaltation, but otherwise unchanged. Yet those that frequented the "Long Leopard," and had the root of the matter well planted in them, found their fancies grow and thrive in those incomparable surroundings, in that enchanted atmosphere, in those stimulating cannikins, until at last it escaped the earth and scaled the skies like the immortal beanstalk in the babies' fable.

When Colonel Lane, under the tutelage of his newly-made friend and henchman in the garments of green and yellow, entered the main chamber of the "Long Leopard," he was quick to appreciate its merits. With the alertness of a soldier who was also something of a scholar, he gauged in a glance the proffer of comfort made by the place, and embellished the generous suggestions with friendly fancies of his own. The warm dark walls, the shining pewter, the ruddy curtains, the friendly fire that snapped and flashed upon the hearth, combined to paint a pleasant picture of Dutch comfort, and to make an admirable background for the various individuals who were at that moment enjoying the hospitality of the "Long Leopard."

Indeed, it was these individuals, even more than their environment, that appealed to Colonel Lane's interest. As he followed his young friend and guide

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to a vacant space at the end of a long table, he glanced sharply about him at the assembled guests with the observing eyes of a man that is well-trained to read characters, and that is afforded the chance to study, as it were, unawares, a number of men who may possibly prove of service to him. So comprehensive was his purview that by the time he and Master Gascoyne were seated, he had recorded a mental picture of every person that was present in the room.

Master Gascoyne of the green-and-yellow garments had dilated much, as they journeyed, upon the peculiarities of the "Long Leopard" and its customers. It was, naturally enough, the favourite resort of such Englishmen as came to Breda, either from simple-hearted loyalty or spurred by an untimely hope of a quickly coming Restoration, and the thought of consequent advancement. Naturally, because all Englishmen coming to Breda invariably addressed themselves to Master Peter Yeoman, and Master Peter Yeoman as inevitably recommended to their attention the tavern of the "Long Leopard" as an exceptionally commendable tavern. These were, for the most part, rat-poor, but for all the pinch of their poverty they managed to haunt the "Long Leopard," and to drink, with their dwindling silver, devout toasts to a sovereign no less wretched than themselves. But its principal patrons were drawn from the ranks of the scholars and doctors of Divinity, Law and Medicine who, in spite of the gravity of the subjects they studied and disseminated, allowed their solemnities to evaporate in the comfortable atmosphere of the kindly inn. Under the noble potency of its vintages, the most acrimonious disputants softened their note, and thorny problems, theological,

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legal, and medical, seemed to blossom with roses like the Papal staff.

Every class of the habitual frequenters of the "Long Leopard" seemed to be represented in the room at the time of Colonel Lane's arrival. As for that honest gentleman, after seating himself and accepting his companion's judgment as to the best wine obtainable, he began to look about him more closely. What he saw and what he heard afforded him very considerable amusement. The long, low ancient room was thickly befogged with the smoke from many pipes, and the sharp smell of the burning herb was curiously blended with the heady perfume of various hot and steaming compounds with which certain of the company regaled themselves copiously after their custom, keeping out what they called the rawness of the morning. Through the mist figures moved, arms gesticulated, heads wagged. Through the mist floated a bewildering babble of voices in what seemed at first as indistinguishable a confusion as the cries of startled sea-birds. But after a little while, just as Colonel Lane's vision became familiarized with the dimness, and was able to make out eager faces of various ages all about him, so, too, his hearing became attuned to the hubbub, and was able to make certain that it was listening to human and intelligible speech. Long before his companion, whose familiarity with the place made it as clear to him as open noon, had finished his list of notables present, the colonel had thoroughly taken his bearings and made himself at home.

He soon discovered that the frequenters of the place had, for the most part, a passion for scholastic discussion, and prided themselves upon the diabolical in-



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genuity with which they could split casuistical hairs and spin theoretical webs. Hard by him two young gentlemen were discussing, with great heat over a flask of yellow wine, the delicate question as to which was the upper and which the lower end of the ace of diamonds in a pack of playing cards. It seemed from their brisk conversation, to which the colonel felt by no means ashamed to listen, as it was delivered in a high pitch that, indeed, constrained attention, that the question had been propounded by a learned doctor to his class of students, and that all the young scholasticism of Breda was agog to find some plausible answer to a problem which promised to be as magnificently puzzling as the question of squaring the circle. Colonel Lane's somewhat plain and straightforward mind was frankly amazed and dazzled by the fireworks of the disputants' ingenuity, and he marvelled exceedingly that any pair of men could find so much to say upon such a question, or should think it worth the saying. His brain fairly reeled as the whimsical delirious arguments gave and took like sword-play. Only the opportune arrival of the ordered wine prevented him, by a timely interruption, from surrendering his reason to a possibility of the question being settled, and thrusting himself into the argument on one side or the other.

Gascoyne poured out two bumpers of the wine, and lifted his brimming goblet towards Lane, who did the like with his.

"Your health, my Colonel," he said, "and success to your enterprise."

The colonel thanked him and drank, and found the wine finely to his liking. But he had not come to the "Long Leopard" merely to drink good wine and to

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keep odd company. He had pressing business on hand, and he was hot to get on with it. He leaned across the table towards his first recruit. "Are any of your friends here?" he questioned.

Gascoyne sent a searching glance into the furthest corners of the room, his familiarized eyes easily piercing the veils of smoke. "Piet van Poop is here," he said, after his gaze had made the circuit, "and Luke East. Goupillot is sure to be here by and by."

"Let us deal at once with those we have under our hand," said Colonel Lane briskly. "Will you be so good as to bring me acquainted with your two friends. Can we hire a room here to be private in, where we can have a talk together?"

Gascoyne nodded. For all that he was so gaily habited and that his face was so jolly, he was overgrown with a new gravity since his meeting with Colonel Lane, and carried himself like a man of affairs.

"Wait here an instant," he said, "until I have a word with Zwink, who will, I make no doubt, oblige us." He rose as he spoke, and, after filling the colonel's cup, which, indeed, the colonel, who was temperate in his drink and diet, had done but little to empty, he left his new commander to his meditations, and made his way across the room to the corner where Master Zwink sat throned and enshrined in pewter.

While the negotiations between Gascoyne and the host were thus toward, Colonel Lane, sipping leisurely at his wine, ruminated with amusement upon the events of the morning. Hard by, his neighbours, that were so hot upon that business of the ace of diamonds, seemed to have come to some agreement, or patched up some truce, for they were no longer discussing that

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momentous problem. Instead, they were now hotly arguing as to which was at once spiritually and physically the most deadly of the seven deadly sins. This new argument was sustained with such a fecundity of illustration, liberality of epithet, vividness of imagination and freedom of phrase, that Colonel Lane, for all that he hated Puritanism and was proud to consider himself a Cavalier, was constrained to the conviction that his voluble neighbours were somewhat unnecessarily free in their speech.

Moved by such feelings, Colonel Lane carried himself and his glass from their present quarters to a vacant place a little nearer to the door. Here he had for immediate neighbours two men that sat in a window-seat and discoursed most vehemently about the Greek language. At least one of the party discoursed while the other listened, and occasionally interjected what seemed to the colonel to be very despairing questions. The man that discoursed was an elderly scholar, whose corporeal being seemed to ooze knowledge. He spoke in a shrill, high voice, the voice of one that is accustomed to lecture a class, the voice of one to whom it has never occurred that the human voice is a beautiful instrument, capable of infinite and exquisite modulation. He laboured away at his theme, talking thinly at a high pitch, and wetting his somewhat squeaky whistle at frequent intervals with copious libations of wine. The one that was thus harangued was so placed with regard to the colonel that Lane could not see him very well or learn much more of him than that he showed young, and seemed simple faced. From what he said, Colonel Lane was led to infer that he was likewise simple-minded. At the moment the elder man was

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speaking a great enthusiasm on the marvellous beauty of the Greek verbs.

The patient listener, whom Colonel Lane felt a little inclined to pity, took advantage of a pause in the flow of words, during which the lecturer applied himself to his flagon, to interpolate a question of his own.

"It is all very fine," he said wistfully, "but it doesn't seem to me to be such plain sailing as all that. There is the aorist, for instance. Damn me if I can make head or tail of the aorist. Sometimes it seems to mean one thing and sometimes it seems to mean another."

"That is its peculiar beauty," gurgled the scholar over the rim of his cannikin. He had not time to say more, for his pupil, who evidently took the eccentricities of the aorist very keenly to heart—Colonel Lane remembered something of the same feelings in boyhood—began again:

"Sometimes," he continued sourly, "it means one kind of past time and sometimes another, and sometimes no exact past at all, but a kind of present that isn't a present. Do you call that a rational language? I like things to be plain sailing and to mean what they say."

The pedagogue sat down his tankard with a heavy sigh, and shook his head reproachfully at his pupil.

"You will never make a scholar, Master East," he said, and Colonel Lane pricked up his ears as he heard him. "The root of the matter is not in you. You are too stubborn, too contentious, you are too prone and too prompt to quarrel with the noble victuals that divine philology spreads upon her bounteous table for your benefit. Who are you, indeed, that you should quarrel with the intricate excellence of the aorist?"

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"I am a man like another man," the other muttered grumpily, "and I have a greater respect for a tense that presents the same meaning whenever I meet it, and that does not chop and change every minute like a skittish girl."

"Say no more, Master East, say no more," cried the other in a great rage. "If you can make a better grammar than the Greek grammar, you have my full permission to do so; but in the meantime I will waste no more patience in scattering Attic pearls before swine."

He made as if to rise as he spoke, but the young man suddenly changing his tone, implored him to remain and continue his instructions; the which, after some coaxing, the other consented to do. Colonel Lane was still smiling at the thought of the things that men will do to please women, when his ideas were diverted by the sudden appearance of Gascoyne at the other end of the room.

The colonel rose from his seat and moved towards the door to meet his new friend, leaving his neighbours still in the thick of their linguistical discussion. As the colonel made his way through the thronged benches and the steamy atmosphere, he noted in a corner hard by the door, a pair of new-comers to the room. One was a burly fellow, with a weather-beaten, wind-bitten face, that glowed from external application of the elements, clement and inclement, and from the internal application of all manner of wines, cordials, and spirituous distillations. Never was a man whose appearance more patently labelled him as a son of the sea. His very presence seemed to bring a pungent saline breath, a breath of swinging seas and slapping

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winds, into the loaded narcotic air of the common-room. Facing this Ulysses, with his back turned to the colonel, sat a young man that was habited like a sailor, indeed, but who seemed to the colonel's mind to be over-dressed for his business. If the elder man was a characteristic sailor, the younger man seemed to be a kind of caricature of his companion; in a word, he was too ostentatiously sea-going not to be an object of suspicion. Colonel Lane, remembering, wondered. Scattered on the table between the pair, lay a quantity of maps and sea-charts, over which the two heads met, as the thick forefinger of the elder man traced courses or indicated currents, and his husky voice muttered information of a highly technical nature, of great interest to those that use the sea for their business, but highly bewildering and misunderstandable to a landsman.

Leaving this pair with regret, Lane joined Gascoyne, who greeted the colonel with the information that the landlord had been pleased to lay his own private room at the colonel's disposition for the next hour, and had given directions that he should be served there with whatever he might require.

"Upon my word," said the colonel, "that is very obliging of him. Lead the way, good Master Gascoyne, and then bring me thither your friends."

Master Gascoyne, thus adjured, piloted the colonel through the fog and the feet, to the door of the crowded room, and in a little while the pair found themselves, first in a corridor, and then in a room which proved to be a kind of picture in little of the apartment they had just quitted. The same dark oak lined the walls; the same splendid sheen of pewter lent its glory to the

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noble gloom of the panelling, as of moonlight flooding a midnight sea. There was a solid circular oaken table in the middle of the room that seemed to suggest conviviality, and there were a number of no less solid oaken chairs. Under the dresser, on which the pewter were glowed so sombrely, was a cupboard, whose slightly opened doors revealed delicious glimpses of many snug and comfortable bottles, ample and fantastical in shape.

In the middle of the room Mynheer Zwink was standing, a portly personage who seemed the incarnation of good cheer. He greeted Colonel Lane with great amiability in a speech of welcome, whose general drift Colonel Lane knew enough of colloquial Dutch to understand. Then, with many congees, Mynheer Zwink withdrew, and left Lane and Gascoyne in possession of his parlour.

Colonel Lane addressed Gascoyne. "Will you oblige me," he said, "by bringing your friends to me here, and will you further increase my obligation by ordering such a supply of liquor as you think may be necessary to wet our bargain pleasantly? It is never your dry recruit that takes the shilling nimbly."

Gascoyne nodded comprehension and quitted the room. When he had gone, the colonel took his seat at the head of the oak table, in such a position that, while he should face the new-comers, he himself had his back to the window. It is a familiar strategy, but one that, in Colonel Lane's opinion, it was never worth while to neglect. Indeed, when Colonel Lane had any matter of importance in hand, he never permitted himself to omit any precaution, however trivial, that might serve to advance his enterprise. "Big things

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win battles," he admitted, "but little things sometimes save you from losing them."

Colonel Lane mused for a little while in solitude, tapping a tattoo with the finger-tips of his right hand upon the smooth surface of the board. His meditations were, however, soon interrupted. In the first place came a drawer, armed with a plentiful supply of wine and drinking-cups. When he had passed the time of day with the colonel and had arranged his burden to his satisfaction upon the table, he withdrew. But he had scarcely closed the door behind him when it was opened again, and Gascoyne entered the room with three men at his tail. These the colonel recognized at once, for had he not already seen them in the common-room? As the colonel's experienced eye ran them over, and his quick mind sized them up, he was ready to admit that Master Gascoyne had some idea of the stuff that volunteers for a forlorn hope are made of.

The colonel rose to his feet as the men entered, and Gascoyne, advancing a little ahead of his fellows, presented them to his newly-found general in a little speech.

"Colonel Lane," he said, "these are the friends of mine of whom I spoke to you. They are all good fellows, or they would never be friends of mine, and they are ready and willing to hear what you have got to say to them."

"Here," he said, bringing forward a sturdily-built young fellow with an honest, staring face, and pleasant, animal-like eyes, whom Lane knew to be the reluctant Greek student, "here is Master Luke East, that is my very good friend and rival."

Luke East made a somewhat sheepish salutation



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which the colonel acknowledged gravely. East stood then a little of one side, and Gascoyne brought forward a very plump, very smooth-skinned youth, whose rosy cheeks and small, smiling eyes seemed to testify to an immense satisfaction at the good cheer of Breda. His carriage was something ungainly from over-flesh, and his salutation came awkwardly off, but he condoned his clumsiness with a jolly, foolish laugh.

"This," said the Master of the Ceremonies, "is Mynheer Piet van Poop, that is also my very good friend, and also my very good rival." He let van Poop take his place by the side of Luke East and then drew forward the third and last of his companions. This was a dark-skinned, dark-haired, eager-eyed personage, with high cheek-bones and a lean, lithe figure that commended itself highly to the favour of Colonel Lane. Colonel Lane recognized the extravagant mariner of the common-room, and was humorously pitiful of a certain yellowness of visage, a certain drawnness of cheek, a certain haggardness of aspect. "This," formulated Gascoyne, "is Monsieur Jean-Marie Goupillot, that is my very good friend and rival."

The Frenchman bowed with a flourishing air, and the ceremony of presentation was complete.

Colonel Lane slowly filled out five cups of wine, and taking up one himself, invited his new friends to join him. When every man held his mug, the colonel raised his vessel in greeting; the others did the like; five measures of wine were raised to a convenient angle, five ruddy streams coursed down five gullets, and a moment later five empty beakers rattled upon the oak. Then Colonel Lane bade his guests be seated, and, seating himself, proceeded to address them.

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"Sirs," he said, "Master Gascoyne yonder, whose acquaintance I count myself fortunate to have made this morning, will, I have no doubt, have delivered unto you some small hint of the reason why we are assembled here together."

All his auditors nodded, and Luke East took it upon himself to speak, as Master Gascoyne, for once in a way, consented to keep silence.

"We understand," he said, speaking slowly and deliberately, as is the way with those of his nature that are little used to words, and are not over nimble of intelligence, "that your honour is on the look-out for a certain number of men to serve under you in a difficult and dangerous enterprise. We understand that you are ready to pay those well, that are ready to serve you well." He shut his mouth sharply, evidently surprised to find himself saying so much. The Dutchman and the Frenchman nodded sympathetically.

Colonel Lane leaned upon the table and began to talk to his new companions in an easy, quiet manner.

"What Master East has said," he began, "is quite true. I am engaged upon an enterprise which is at once difficult and dangerous, and I am looking for a certain number of stout fellows who are willing to aid me in my endeavour, in exchange for a certain number of pieces of shining metal. I have gathered from Master Gascoyne here, that, as he is certainly willing to share my adventure, so probably you others will also be willing to share it."

A low murmur as of approval followed upon this first pause in Colonel Lane's harangue. But, without allowing the murmur to volume into articulate speech, Colonel Lane resumed his course.

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"I have been given to understand," he continued, "that you are all venturesome men, and further, that you all have, at this present, certain private reasons for indifference to discomfort and danger, in the first place, and for being wishful to put some money into your pocket, in the second place."

The murmur of his hearers was renewed even more vehemently than before, and at the sympathetic sound, the colonel's hitherto impassive face widened with a smile, and he hastened to catch up the thread of his discourse.

"I am acting in this business," he continued, "in the interests of his Majesty the King, and those among you who happen to be King's men, like my friend Master Gascoyne, have so much the greater advantage in taking my money and serving my purpose. In a word, I seek to enroll a little fellowship of soldiers that shall accept my absolute command and swear me implicit obedience. In return for such service, which will begin and end, as I hope and believe, within the compass of a single week, I engage to pay to each man the sum of twenty guineas, ten of these guineas to be paid down on agreement to these terms and ten at its issue."

Colonel Lane marked with approval the effect of his words upon the company. Twenty golden guineas for a week's work was good pay, even if the risk involved were grave to the extremity. Before the eyes of each, as in a prismatic mist, swam a vision of the face of a golden-haired girl with mocking blue eyes and mocking red lips, who seemed to challenge them to do some further deed of wonder to prove their devotion to her name. The colonel, remembering the amazing

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tale that Gascoyne had told him, seemed to read their thoughts, and he smiled as he read. But it was a smile too fine and delicate to be detected and marvelled at by the susceptibilities of the lovers.

There was need of little further parleying. The young men, who listened to Colonel Lane's explanations, seemed to be to the full as eager to enlist under his banner as he to enlist them. All and each, they recognized that, from the moment when they agreed to keep Colonel Lane company and follow his lead, they became his soldiers and accepted all the duties and penalties of the soldier's life. Colonel Lane further explained to his new friends that he needed a total number of twelve good fellows for his enterprise, and he urged them, if they numbered amongst their acquaintanceship any friends of their kidney, desperate, resolved jacks that would fight the devil for twenty guineas, then by all means let them press these valiants into his service. For the better knowledge of how they should succeed in this experiment, which seemed to his hearers to present no difficulty other than the difficulty of selection, he engaged them to meet him again on the following noon at that same "Long Leopard," when they should report to him of their successes. These matters being cordially inter-agreed upon, Colonel Lane took an amiable farewell of his unexpected levy, and, leaving them to finish the wine and to chatter among themselves over what had happened, went his well-satisfied way, and crossed the "Long Leopard's" threshold into the air.

## CHAPTER XVI

### MASTER PETER DECLINES A TITLE

**W**HILE Jane was busy reading a riddle, and Colonel Lane, whimsically assisted by destiny, was busy beating up recruits for his expedition, Charles himself, the King for whom they both were working, had not passed an idle morning. He had risen earlier than usual, and as soon as seemed decently permissible, he had dispatched Master Challis on an errand to that excellent burgomaster of Breda, Master Peter Yeoman. It was Mr. Secretary's care and duty to deliver to Master Peter a letter that Mr. Secretary had scrolled, and that his Majesty had duly signed, requesting the said Peter Yeoman to wait upon his Majesty at his Majesty's royal residence with the earliest obedience that might be compatible with the pressure of Master Burgomaster's business. Charles knew his worthy landlord pretty well, knew that his sturdy, stubborn common sense declined to regard as a reigning monarch a man who lived in gaunt lodgings and did not pay his rent. He did not, therefore, tempt refusal by any assumption in his letter of the kingly dignity. He simply wrote as a tenant might write to his landlord, if the tenant happened to be, for all his misfortunes, of royal blood, and the landlord a man of his own race.

It is already known that Master Peter Yeoman had now lived for many years in the Low Countries,

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a pluralist in occupations, and had assumed the language and the dress of the Fleming with a success that had seldom been equalled. But neither his long residence nor his intimate association with men and women of the foreign race had paled the ruddy Kentish colour in his cheeks or lessened the shrewdness in the clear Kentish eyes. To look upon him as he walked the streets in his sober richness of furs and stuffs, you would have taken him for what, no doubt, he seemed to be, a well-to-do Flemish merchant and magistrate, who, to judge by the number of salutations that greeted him, stood high in the esteem of his fellow-citizens. Master Peter knew the language of his adopted country so fluently and idiomatically, that his assimilation to his Flemish appearance was not diminished when he spoke, which he did often and copiously, but you only needed to address him in English, and in consequence to get from him a reply in the speech of England, to know at once that, for all he was transplanted, he was still British oak.

The good man had thriven amazingly since the days when he came from the Kentish sea-board across the stormy waters, to try his luck abroad, with little silver in his pocket and nothing to back him but his own stubborn determination to make his way. He had somehow chanced upon opportunity in the first halt he made, and in that spot he had remained ever since, patient, alert, painstaking, audacious when audacity was wise, slowly widening his fortunes as the wheel of his girth widened, till at the time when he counted a penniless king among his clients, he was reputed to be, and probably was, by far the richest man in the town.

It was, in the judgment of the good citizens of the

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town, no small compliment to Master Peter that he had gained such a reputation. For Breda had been a thriving town through all its varied history. Time and again it had been the theatre of fierce and cruel war. Spaniards had taken it and held it for a season; Dutchmen had taken it back again and driven the Spaniards out. Then, after a lapse of years, the Spaniards had returned and captured Breda again, after a ten months' siege, and Spanish flags flew over Breda's towers, and Spanish hidalgos walked in Breda's streets, and the air hummed with the music of the soft Castilian speech. Then, after a term of years as long as Jacob's probation, the Dutchmen's hour of triumph came, and the Spaniard and his flags and his hidalgos and his soft Castilian speech, was driven out of Breda, and Breda was Dutchman's country once again. But, whoever ruled the roast, Breda was always a place where men worked busily to make money and very many succeeded in that business. But no man was more successful than the stranger, Peter Yeoman.

Indeed, popular report said confidently of Master Peter, that no other three fortunes in the place would weigh down his single fortune in the balance. He owned a number of houses in the town, and his rents as a landlord alone would have been sufficient to prove him a thriving citizen, if he had no other means of replenishing his exchequer and were not as well ship-owner, shopkeeper, moneylender, and farmer. He would scarcely have thriven as a landlord, however, if all those to whom he afforded lodging for a consideration had been in such a lack-penny condition as the young man, Charles Stuart.

Master Peter was no fervent politician, at least as

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far as England was concerned. He was keenly interested, indeed, in the local affairs of the little town that had adopted him, and on its town councils and the like he was a man of weight and influence, whose support was valuable and whose opposition was serious in any question of municipal dispute. But distance had tempered, almost to attenuation, his interests in the politics of his native land. Since he had come to that little Flemish city, many and great changes had taken place in England, and been duly and shrewdly noted by him without, however, inflaming him to any passion of partizanship. He had seen the King, whose authority seemed unquestioned, defied by unexpected revolution, finally imprisoned, dethroned, and at last beheaded. He had seen, and seen with something of a sturdy satisfaction, the rapid growth of a Commonwealth that had shown a valorous self-assertion, and had made his mother-country take a new and commanding position among the European powers.

Master Peter's concern was not with the politics of England, her wars and revolutions and factions, but with the piling up of money in Breda. A very powerful reason, more powerful even than the natural ambition of the business man, had stimulated him in the beginning of his foreign career to gain wealth, and the habit he had thus formed outlasted the need, and old Master Peter Yeoman was as keen to accumulate store of gold as ever young Master Peter Yeoman had been. So, while his native land was changing so amazingly, Master Peter gave the changes scarcely any closer heed than he would have done if he had been a Breda burgher born and bred. A king's head might fall on the scaffold, a man of mean estate might rise to be the master



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of a kingdom and a king in all but name, but Master Peter had his work to do, the work of making himself ever richer and richer, and had little time to spare for thinking about King or Protector.

But if he did not weep loyal tears for the king who was killed at Whitehall, he wept no more when the man whom his enemies foolishly called the "Brewer" died in the night of the great storm and left the England he had made so formidable a prey to military factions, and his dreamed-of dynasty to dissolve into nothingness. He was neither elated nor dismayed when the young man, Charles Stuart, drifting deeper and deeper into decay, became a lodger under one of his many roofs. He was not Royalist enough to regard the young man, who wore a shabby suit and who carried no money in his idle pockets, as his legitimate sovereign. On the other hand, he was not Republican enough to resent the young man's claim to sovereignty, or to be irritated by the possibility, a very unlikely possibility, as it seemed to Master Peter in common with most other people, that his needy lodger would some day become in reality King of England.

It was, therefore, with neither friendliness nor hostility, affection nor dislike, that Master Yeoman received the invitation to wait upon Charles Stuart, and accepted the invitation. It was, indeed, a concession to Charles's dignity for Master Yeoman to consent to wait upon him. Many a wealthier client would have been well content to make ante-chamber in Master Yeoman's own house. Master Yeoman, indeed, hoped against hope as he went on his way to Charles's lodging, that the result of the interview might be the payment of certain arrears, but he felt that, even if this were not so, he could not

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quite bring himself to turn into the street so light-hearted and joyous a vagabond.

Indeed, the worthy man would not willingly have admitted how much his honest nature had been taken by the high spirits and sweet temper with which the would-be king faced adversity. To Peter Yeoman's business mind, a creditor was a creditor, whether he were a king or a beggar, and the fact that he made any sort of exception to his rigid rules of business in favour of Charles was an astonishing tribute to the young man's power of arousing sympathy. As Master Peter jogged along, he allowed himself to smile at his memory of yesterday. He had a mental picture of the handsome, black-haired, bold-eyed young man laughingly holding his own in the midst of the mob of market-women whom he was trying to persuade that he was indeed the son of a king. Master Peter's sense of dignity had protested a little against being involved in the absurd brawl, yet he lingered on the spot, after he had given his convincing testimony, long enough to be assured that all was well with the merry, reckless young gentleman. The smile slowly changed to a frown as he began to wonder anew what that same merry, reckless young gentleman had to say to him.

When Master Peter Yeoman was introduced by Mr. Secretary Challis into the unkempt room where Charles was seated, and left alone with the man who claimed, with an audacity that seemed monstrous in such surroundings, to be his king, the pair presented a sufficiently whimsical contrast. On the one side was the exiled, penniless prince, a tall fellow of his hands, very swarthy, a jolly smile for the moment illuminating the naturally saturnine lines of his countenance, his big body

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miserably clad in shabby finery, which might have seemed the more shabby on another, because it made a poor pretence to be fine, but which Charles was able to carry with something of a regal air. On the other, was the stolid, sturdy Englishman, whose stolidity and whose sturdiness were intensified by his acquired air of Flemish dignity, whose every movement suggested the standing conferred by full pockets and full coffers, and whose dress, in its sober richness, consorted fitly with his position in the town, and the means he had amassed.

Charles was conscious enough of the contrast, but showed no sign of such knowledge as he gave his guest a gracious salutation.

"Advance, friend," he said cheerfully, with a tinge of mockery in his cheer, "advance, and do not let the sight of royalty dash you."

A slight smile intensified the heavier wrinkles on Master Peter Yeoman's countenance, as he answered Charles's speech. "It does not dash me a tittle," he said bluffly, "when royalty sits in so mean a room and wears so mean a coat."

Charles laughed heartily at the frankness of the man. He relished the salt savours of his outspokenness. He touched his shabby doublet with his fingers.

"Can you not see my true majesty shining through these rags?" he asked. Yeoman eyed him steadily, taking in with his keen glance every patch, every stain, every defect in the young man's apparel.

"Not a glint," he said, "not a glimmer. A king is no king for me, if he has not a crown on his head, and a sceptre in his fist."

Here, indeed, Master Peter was speaking his mind. He believed in wealth, in power, in all the great moving

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forces of life, but he liked them to air themselves bravely and show themselves for what they were. A rich man should dress like a rich man. Master Peter would have regarded a man of wealth who went abroad in shabby raiment, or lived at home in shabby style, as a pitiful fellow, unworthy of the counters he controlled. Wealth was good to get, but also wealth was good to use. In the same spirit Master Peter found it little less impossible to feel reverence for a king that did not carry with him the patent signs of kingship.

Charles sprang to his feet with an air of great alacrity.

"Say you so?" he said. "Then you shall be satisfied. I never travel without the tools of my trade." As he spoke, he went to the dresser, which served to shrine some of his few possessions, and drew from a corner a gilded sceptre and a gilded crown, enriched with a few coloured stones. They were part of some foolish gauds that Pippet had been at the pains to procure about the Christmas-tide, to aid in the making of a seasonable jollification, and because they were of no value, they had since remained in the possession of the Royal Household. He put the crown upon his tousled black locks with as much solemnity as if he were assisting at his proper coronation, and pointing the sceptre at Master Yeoman with an air of portentous grandeur, he asked, "Come, do I show more majestic now?"

Master Yeoman looked the prince up and down with a broad smile blowing over his wrinkles.

"It certainly brightens you up a bit," he admitted, after a while, "yet after all, it is no more than a player might do, and look no less, and be no more a king."

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Charles tapped him playfully on the shoulder with the sceptre, laughing heartily at his visitor's frankness. "You are in the right, old friend," he said jovially, "in the right. These glittering gauds that I carry so proudly are, in truth, a part of a player's kit. Were these tawdry jewels real, I should have picked them out of their houses and pawned them long ago, to find me meat and drink and raiment." He paused for a moment while a whimsical smile rippled over his features; then he resumed. "Come to think of it, could there be anything more tragico-comic, pathetico-fantastical than a king like me with such a regalia?"

Master Yeoman did not seem to be profoundly impressed by the king's reflections.

"What does your Majesty want with me?" he asked bluffly. He guessed what was to follow these ironic preliminaries, and was little pleased at the prospect.

Charles answered him with an air that he tried to make full of confidence. "Money, friend," he answered, with a careless air as of one that had but to ask and have. Then, seeing the growing frown on Master Yeoman's face, he continued as if asking a favour easily granted, and making no unreasonable demands. "Oh, only money. A trifling loan to be repaid with generous interest and incredible punctuality."

By now the smile had wholly disappeared from Master Peter's face, and the discontented frown usurped its place. He had not really hoped that those arrears of his would be paid, or any portion of them, yet there was always the possibility, and the certainty that nothing was forthcoming was not pleasing.

"Your Majesty has come to the wrong shop," he said gravely. "Money is a rare and precious commodity,

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and when I lend it, I only lend on unquestionable security."

Charles struck a commanding attitude, and slapped his chest heroically. "What better security than the throne of England?" he asked, and as he did so he tossed his head so rashly that the paste-board crown quitted its lodging on his head, and rolled ignominiously on the floor. As Charles stooped to rescue his sham splendour, Master Yeoman smiled a grim smile.

"I thought," he said, "a fellow named Monk was sitting on one arm of that same throne, and a fellow named Lambert on the other arm."

Charles nodded as he re-adjusted his mimic crown. "Exactly," he agreed, "and so poised that if one of them gets up the other must needs fall down. They are jealous of each other, those two. One or other will declare for me. He will be the one that gets up."

Master Peter smiled sourly. "My advices from England," he said, "do not agree with your Majesty's. I am inclined to infer, from all that I learn, that General Lambert is no better than a beaten cur, and that General Monk has the power, and the will, to try his hand at playing the part of a second Cromwell."

Charles laughed as merrily as if the matter did not concern him in the least.

"There is a part," he said, very candidly, "that will take a mighty deal of playing. The old fellow was a devil, but he knew how to hold his own—and other folks'," he added lightly. He was silent for a few seconds, during which he looked steadily at Master Peter, who looked back as steadily at him. Then he began again. "Well, Master Peter, touching this loan of ours."

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Master Peter shook his head doggedly.

"There is no loan of ours to discuss, your Majesty," he said decisively, "unless you have better security to offer than the throne of England."

Charles pondered for a space, with a very grave face. Then his brow cleared a little, and a smile of satisfaction softened his face. "I have it," he cried, and gave a slap to the table. "How would it please you, Master Peter, to accept a peerage? You shall be baron, viscount or earl—duke, even, for the matter of that, if you choose to pay well enough. Say the word, and I will give order for your letters-patent."

Master Peter shook his head slowly, and permitted himself the liberty of something that closely resembled a wink.

"Your Majesty is very generous," he said, "but to my simple mind those fine-sounding titles you talk of should be worn by inhabitants of castles in Spain. They are at once too grand and too impalpable for a plain, workaday burgess of Breda."

Charles protested vociferously.

"Upon my word," he declared, "I think you would become an earldom very well. I have seen you in your Burgomaster's furs and velvets, and I swear that you looked as stately as any peer I have ever seen at Westminster. Come now, Master Peter, will you ever have the heart to slip this golden opportunity? Will you not be a duke, or an earl, or a viscount, or baron?"

Master Peter steadily shook his head, as each high-sounding title rolled from the royal lips. Charles was, or pretended to be, provoked.

"Zounds, man!" he cried, "I have no patience with your self-complacency. Here you are losing the chance

of a lifetime. Lord Yeoman of Breda would not sound amiss, and I will let you have the privilege cheap, because I am short of cash. Egad, man, I am so hard-pressed that I think I would be willing to make you a knight of the Garter, if you were willing to pay the price I should ask."

Again Master Peter shook his stubborn head. It may be that if he had felt more confidence in the probability, or even the possibility, of a Restoration, he might have been tempted by the glittering offers of Charles's mockery. He had never professed any republican principles; he had a keen appreciation of the value of rank and title, though, as a practical business man, he had a keener appreciation of the value of cash and title-deeds. The offer of a Garter he accepted as a jest, but he knew very well that he was more than rich enough to wear an earldom with conspicuous credit. He had been so long away from his mother-land, and, again as a practical man, he had grown so scornful of her unbusiness-like dissensions, that he had not for many a day entertained any serious thought of seeing England again. But the specious suggestion of the exile-king had troubled his spirit. He was far from being an imaginative man — though, indeed, he had his measure of imagination, or he would never have done what he did do, or climbed to where he stood. Such imagination as he had was fired by the malicious fancies of Charles. He saw himself the master of some noble English manor; he dreamed, in a flash, of deer-parks and goodly gardens and ample orchards; he saw himself the lord of some golden house in London; he saw himself taking his place among the assembled peers. If only Charles had been a real king.



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But Charles was not, and never would be, a real king, and there was an end. So the Burgomaster shook his head, and, as he did so, his glance, travelling carelessly about the room, lighted upon that portrait on the wall which, in its melancholy dignity, lent a glory to the dismal scene. A cunning look suddenly crumpled Master Peter's smooth cheeks, only to disappear as swiftly as it came. He rested his gaze on Charles's face, and spoke slowly.

"Perhaps there is something I can do for you," he said slowly. His host, who was also his tenant, eagerly caught him up.

"What is it, man, what is it?" he cried. Master Peter answered him with the same deliberate slowness.

"I know something of pictures," he said. "A man could not live so long as I have lived in the Low Countries, and not know something of pictures." He paid no heed to the frown on Charles's forehead, though he paused a moment to watch it grow, before he continued his speech. "That picture yonder is a good picture," he asserted, "and I have taken a fancy to it. I have a little picture-gallery of my own, which is considered to be by connoisseurs far from one of the worst in Breda. Will you name me your price for that picture?"

The frown on Charles's face had vanished as suddenly as it came. He looked steadily at Master Peter.

"I am afraid, Master Peter," he said, "that you will have to deny yourself. That picture is not for sale."

Master Peter raised his eyebrows and feigned greater surprise than he felt.

"Not for sale," he echoed. "Come, come, your Majesty, with all respect for your royal person, you must permit me to say that you are something of a

queer customer. You offer me what titles I please; you are pleased to place the Order of the Garter upon the market, and yet you make a difficulty about parting with a few square inches of painted canvas. I find your Majesty too nice. I have taken a fancy to that picture, and I will give you a hundred pounds of English money for it."

Charles shook his head, and a faint smile played about his lips. "That picture is not for sale," he said again.

Master Peter looked annoyed. "I do not like to be baulked," he declared. "I am always ready to pay a price for my whimsies. Will you take two hundred pounds for it?"

Charles, with his legs stretched out straight before him, and his hands deep in his breeches' pockets, smiled at Master Peter's heat.

"Master Peter," he said, "I could make you Duke of Breda, and I might, if the Heralds would let me, give you the Garter, if you were willing to pay for those privileges. You are not so willing, and one day you may regret your unwillingness. But neither the half of your fortune nor the whole of your fortune would buy from me that picture."

Master Peter tapped the ground impatiently with the point of his gold-headed cane.

"Is your Majesty serious?" he asked, with a display of annoyance, which was all the greater because he suddenly felt a vague disquietude. What if after all Charles were right, and Peter Yeoman should one day regret having declined nobility. Charles rose to his feet.

"Perfectly serious, Master Peter," he answered tranquilly. "I like money as well as another, and I need it, God knows, more than most, and it may be that

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from many points of view I may seem no little of a fool for my obstinacy." He turned towards the picture and saluted it. "But I should despise myself if I sold that picture. It is, as you say, so many square inches of painted cloth, but it is also my self-respect, my sense that I still have the right to think myself a king."

Master Peter grunted as if he could not understand what the young man was saying. As a matter of fact he understood very well.

Yet it may be, seeing how the motives of mortality are inevitably mixed, that Charles's brave words were not inspired solely by a sense of honourable kingship and filial devotion. Though Charles made his high-sounding speech to Master Peter Yeoman, and made it with all sincerity, it was not Master Peter Yeoman whom he was thinking of while he spoke; it was not Master Peter Yeoman whom his spirit addressed. A woman's face, a woman's wonderful eyes, were present to Charles's mind as he proudly asserted his principle. It is not impossible that if Master Peter had made his offer a few days earlier, it might have found acceptance, or at best, a reluctant refusal. But the coming of Jane Lane had altered many things, had roused the exquisite memories of youth, had quickened in Charles feelings and ambitions which, under the hard stress of adversity, had long been suffered to lie dormant. If, therefore, Charles might be likened, in his sonorous integrity, to an actor playing to the gallery, at least that gallery was occupied by but one single figure, and that figure was Jane Lane.

There are moments in the life of almost every man — and those moments are mostly caused by the existence of some woman — when, as in a flash, the mean-

ing of the world seems altered and ennobled, and when a clogged spirituality, cribbed in its murky prison, seems liberated and exalted. The dizzy soul swims in ether; the dim, impossible virtues are suddenly bright personalities; the moon, so vainly cried for, lies like a coin on the palm of the hand; one feels fit for no lesser fellowship than the regiment of the saints, and the cup of hemlock and the crown of thorns show more delectable than the roses of Alcibiades, or the wine of Byblos. And all this marvellous metamorphosis just because a girl is a girl, or a woman a woman; or, rather, to put it with a more honourable justice, because a girl is one kind of girl and because a woman is one kind of woman.

Such a moment had come to Charles, and it came with some such staggering impact as that stroke of noon-day heat on the Damascus road to Saul of Tarsus. He felt as if his body and soul had been re-created, as if he had been divinely privileged to shed the sloth, the lethargy, that had been hugging and numbing him, and had emerged from their pressure into a rarer air wherein he walked with the elasticity of youth and the tranquillity of faith. Charles felt these exquisite emotions vaguely, and would have been hard put to it to interpret them in the terms that would have pleased a poet or a philosopher, but they found their expression, and it may be, their justification, in the fine phrases with which he tickled the ears of Peter Yeoman.

However that may be, Charles vaulted from his high horse no less briskly than he had mounted, and stood once more on the level, smiling quizzically at Master Peter.

"Let us agree," he said pleasantly, "that I was only teasing you. I do want money indeed; I always want

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money; I always have wanted money; I suppose I always shall want money. But I am not in so beggarly a condition as I was, for my dear friends from England have brought moneys with them, and of these moneys they will have it that I must borrow at my need."

Master Peter grunted again. He knew very well that Colonel Lane had placed a very considerable sum in his charge, and he thought to himself that if Charles had the fingering of it, it would very soon cease to be considerable. Maybe Charles read something of his thoughts, for he continued gaily.

"I shall not borrow of him until I am forced," he said, "but I am grateful for his offer, and shall remember it if ever the time comes when my remembering a kindness will be of any service to the kindly doer. You have lost your chance that way, Master Peter; you will never be Duke of Breda and sit in the House of Lords. But you are a good fellow, Master Peter, for all your lack of confidence in my star, and I have a mind to do you and yours a good turn. I have something to say to you that concerns your daughter."

At the mention of his daughter, Master Peter Yeoman, that up till now had been listening to Charles with an air of ironical amusement, instantaneously changed his bearing. A black frown furrowed his forehead, an angry light shone in his eyes, his eyebrows bunched together in a scowl, and he gripped his staff as if he were ready to use it at once as a weapon of defence or of offence. He glared at Charles, who sustained the glare complacently.

"What have you to say," he growled, "that concerns my daughter?"

## CHAPTER XVII

### AN UNEXPECTED RECRUIT

**T**HE first step that Colonel Lane had taken after his first enrolment of recruits in that private room in the "Long Leopard" had been to put one of those very recruits to immediate employment. It was clear to the colonel's mind that, if the tale told by the King had been truly delivered to his Majesty, and if General Monk did indeed seek Sabbath recreation at Birchington in Kent, there would be, on the face of it, little or no difficulty for a daring spirit, backed by half a score or so of stout fellows, in laying hands upon him and carrying him bodily off. But there were several matters which called for serious consideration. In the first place the news might be inaccurate. The gentlemen of the Sealed Knot were, as Colonel Lane was well aware, often desperately untrustworthy in their information, relying on rumour and attenuated shadows of rumour, to a preposterous extent.

If even the statements of the Sealed Knot were as right as right, it did not necessarily follow that the fall of every week would find General Monk taking his ease in his Kentish pleasure-house. It was certain that the General had so much the upper hand in England, that he was, for the time being, so completely master of the situation, that he could easily and safely allow himself the luxury of a weekly holiday.

But it did not, unfortunately, necessarily follow that

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this holiday must always and ever be spent in the same place. Colonel Lane did not know enough about the alleged attractions of Quex to draw any sound or convincing conclusions therefrom. It would be little less than tragical if the colonel and his little band should disembark themselves upon the coast of Kent, only to find that the Puritan General was enjoying himself in some wholly different part of the country.

Colonel Lane knew himself well enough to believe that if such an untoward calamity should prove to be the case, he was man enough still to attempt to carry his enterprise through, and to pluck the much-desired Monk, if 'necessary, even from the very heart of the capital. But the contemplation of that possibility enlarged the scope of the adventure to such enormous proportions that Colonel Lane was creditably anxious to know, when he once again stood upon English earth, exactly where he stood as far as his expédition was concerned.

To this end he must have a confederate on the further side of the sea. To this end he must send an emissary ahead, who should be ready to meet him on his arrival, accurately primed with precise information as to General Monk's whereabouts at the moment of Colonel Lane's landing. This proposition once firmly established, the next question was to decide who this emissary should be.

The decision did not take Colonel Lane very long to arrive at. Reviewing the nucleus of his little army, he settled at once that Luke East was the man for his job. A young gentleman who, having no natural head for the acquirement\*of the tongues, should set himself to master the mysteries of Greek for the sake of pleasing a pretty lass, was clearly, on the face of it, a man of whom much might be expected. Colonel Lane's survey of Luke East,

and such knowledge of Luke East as the colonel was able to glean, confirmed him in this judgment. Luke East seemed sturdy, self-reliant and trustworthy. Also, Luke East was, like Master Gascoyne a Kentish man, a Margate man, and therefore one who should start upon his mission with an initial and highly desirable knowledge of the lie of the land.

This conclusion once arrived at, the colonel lost no time in acting upon it. Master Luke East was taken aside, conferred with, and, after a few minutes of plain, straightforward talk, the matter was then and there settled. It was arranged that Luke East should leave Breda that very day, and should make his way with all convenient speed to England by the earliest vessel leaving the nearest port, for it mattered not what port in England. Once in England, he was given his instructions what to do, and so the second step was taken in the great adventure.

It has to be observed that Colonel Lane did not for one moment entertain the slightest desire to avail himself in his expedition of the services of any of the Cavaliers that were attendant upon his Majesty. Leaving Pippet out of the reckoning, for Pippet was never the man for heady adventures, the others were all men of unquestioned courage, of undoubted loyalty, of recognized honour. But Colonel Lane would not have undertaken his stratagem, or would have undertaken it with very little confidence of its ultimate success, if all, or indeed if any one, of the Cavaliers in question had been concerned in it.

They were not the kind of men he needed for his business. Neither their bravery, nor their loyalty, nor their honour sufficed to make them good soldiers accord-



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ing to the standard of good soldiership set up by Colonel Lane. They possessed not the art of obedience; the spirit of subordination was foreign to them. Each of them would wish to be the leader, no one of them would consent to follow. Colonel Lane naturally intended to command in an adventure that was of his own, or was rather of his sister's, devising, but of which the execution devolved upon him. He wished to have men with him that were apt and ready to be commanded, men who would understand and obey discipline, men that would follow at heel as obediently as well-trained dogs. Dawlish and Welcombe, Garlinge and Kingfisher were cards of another colour, which is the reason why they knew nothing of the great experiment until it was all over and done with.

His first rally of valiants being thus sworn in, his emissary thus dispatched to England, and a good morning's work thus accomplished, Colonel Lane quitted the vicinity of the "Long Leopard" and retraced his steps towards his lodging, with a bosom broadened with exhilaration. Really, so he meditated, he had done very well for a first attempt. Here were some good fellows enlisted, each of whom was like to prove the enlister of as many more; in the which case the colonel might flatter himself that he had raised his little army scarcely less quickly than Jason did when he sowed dragons' teeth.

It was, therefore, in a very self-contented, not to say self-complacent, mood that Colonel Lane trudged briskly along the quays, humming "Here's a Health unto his Majesty" between his teeth. But Colonel Lane was never the man to be so self-contented or so self-complacent as for a moment to allow himself to be off

his guard or to be oblivious of his surroundings. He had not tramped many yards from the doorway of the "Long Leopard" when some trivial indications made him convinced that he was being followed. He did not for a few paces alter a jot the jauntiness of his gait, but after those few paces, he affected suddenly to be interested in something that was happening on the other bank of the canal, and he came to an abrupt halt to observe it.

At the moment when he stood still, he noted the cessation of a certain noise of footfalls behind him, which he had already detected, and which he confidently believed to be dogging him. After a few instants' pause, the colonel, as if satisfied by his inspection of the further bank, resumed his walk, and was immediately aware that his mysterious tracker did the like. Very leisurely the colonel turned from the comparative bustle of the canal into a quiet and deserted side-street, curious to learn if his presumed pursuer would follow him there, and prepared to deal briskly with him if he did.

Half-way down the empty street, the colonel heard the now familiar sound, and made ready, with a grim smile, to swing round and face his shadower. But even as he was in the act of turning on his heels, Colonel Lane's ears were aware that the pursuing footsteps, instead of proceeding cautiously, were now moving towards him both rapidly and decisively. As he completed his circle and stood looking back upon the ground he had just traversed, the colonel beheld, indeed, a man, but a man that was advancing towards him quickly, as if under the command of a steady purpose, and certainly showing no sign of any desire to dissimulate his intention of overtaking the colonel. Observing so

much, the colonel waited where he stood, and wondered while he waited.

In a few moments the colonel and his pursuer were face to face, whereupon the pursuer, coming to a halt, paid the colonel a salute, and wished him a good day in very passable English. The colonel, studying the man, beheld a fellow that was a little over the middle height, and powerfully built, with no superfluous flesh about him. His countenance carried an air of great earnestness and sincerity; it even seemed to the colonel's mind a thought too insistent in its assertion of good-fellowship and good-faith, but this, as the colonel swiftly reflected, may have been no other than characteristic of the native openness and vehemence of one that was apparently of southern blood. There was little, however, of southern love of colour or display in the man's habit. He was plainly and soberly dressed, more like a citizen than a soldier, yet the colonel felt very sure that he had to deal with one that had been a soldier. The colonel looked at the stranger steadily, and the stranger gave him back his gaze.

"Why have you been following me?" the colonel asked, in reply to the man's salutation. The colonel had a natural dislike to be dogged by any man for any purpose, but he did not believe that the man's intentions were mischievous. It was open day; Breda was no lawless town; and besides, the colonel knew very well, for all his modesty, that he was not the person whom any single man would think lightly of attacking.

The stranger seemed in no wise embarrassed by the peremptory brevity of Colonel Lane's summons. He made a gesture with his hands that seemed half apologetic and half assertive.

"Honoured sir," he said, "I will make so bold as to be quite frank with you."

The colonel's eyes assured the stranger that such, indeed, would be his wisest course. The colonel's ears assured himself that the man spoke a very precise English with a very precise pronunciation that was patently not English. The stranger took the colonel's minatory silence as permission to speak, and continued to this effect, in a voice that he was at pains to render at once suave and manly.

"Honoured sir," he resumed, "half my tale will be told when I say that I drank this afternoon at the 'Long Leopard.' I have my wits about me, even while I drink, and I never allow myself to drink enough to dim my wits. My curiosity was piqued not a little when I saw you, a stranger, enter the room in the company of young Gascoyne. I think, honoured sir, that the rumours of adventure are blown about like the pollen of a plant, and fertilize swiftly in a kindling soil."

"I do not remember to have seen your face," was the only answer that Colonel Lane vouchsafed to this harangue. The man was quick with his answering explanation.

"I was seated in a window-recess," he said, "and shielded by a curtain from the range of your honour's vision. But there I sat, none the less, and my interest being quickened, I took the liberty to observe what happened."

The colonel was inwardly amused, though he showed no amusement on his countenance. Here had he been diverting himself with his observation of them that frequented the "Long Leopard," and all the while, quite unknowingly, he had provided himself as the quarry for

another man's observation. That other still went on with his story.

"I noted," he said, "how Master Gascoyne went and came; how he trafficked in whispers with Mynheer Zwick; how by and by he beckoned you away from the common-room; and how, when you were gone, he returned thither again and gathered about him his English friend and his Dutch friend and his French friend, and bore them away with him."

He paused for a moment, as if expecting the colonel to say something. The colonel nodded his head. "You are observant," he commented. "You should make a good scout."

The man seemed pleased at the colonel's measure of praise. "I assure you, honoured sir," he declared earnestly, "that I am a very useful fellow in an enterprise."

"And what, pray," inquired the colonel, "have your capacities for enterprise to do with me?"

The fellow looked slyly up into the colonel's purposely expressionless face.

"Why, for that matter," he replied, "my curiosity caught fire, and I made bold to follow your friends, and saw them enter a certain room, where I guessed you to be. I am an old campaigner. I neighboured the door so closely that I got a whiff of what was brewing within."

The colonel was not unamused at the fellow's effrontery, but he showed no amusement. "I do not like eavesdroppers," he said sententiously.

The other hastened to agree with him. "Neither do I," he protested vehemently, "and you must not ill-judge me. I am sorely in need of service; my fingers

itch to be busy again, my toes clamour to tramp. If I smelt a chance of service, you should not blame me if I was prompt to follow up the scent. You would have been the loser had I done otherwise, for I can assure you without boasting, that while I do not lack the capacity of a leader, I can make a most excellent subaltern."

The colonel all this while was surveying the speaker with a speculative eye. The man was well set-up and soldierly; he seemed to be nimble of mind as well as nimble of body. The face was not one that a well-advised painter would have chosen for an allegorical figure of Continnence; the matter behind the affable manner smacked furiously of the tavern desperado. Colonel Lane did not like that business of listening at the door. But then, on the other hand, Colonel Lane was not engaged in beating up members for a class in Divinity. He was out and about to gather together a dozen or so of tough partisans, who would do as they were told, so long as they were paid their price. Outside of this qualification it mattered little whether they were short or tall, fat or lean, a little lower than the angels, or wicked as sin. A band of God-fearing citizens might be easier to handle than a gang of abandoned rascals, but Colonel Lane was quietly, without being at all assertively, conscious that he would be able to manage any body of men that enlisted to serve under him, whether their tempers were angelical or diabolical. He frankly admitted to himself that his palate, so to speak, had been a little cloyed by his first good fortune in finding such promising recruits. But he knew that he had no right to hope that all his levy would be composed of such decent fellows as Gascoyne and his companions.

"You seem," said the colonel slowly, "to know more of my affairs than I know of yours. Where have you seen service?"

"It would even be simpler," the man answered, "to say where I have not served. I have been here, there, and everywhere, a veritable Free-Companion, like the good gentlemen of old. I am good at sword, at pike, at matchlock; I can ride a horse, sail a ship, handle a piece of ordnance. Devil take me if I know what there is that has any connection with the art of war of which I have not some smattering. I will serve any captain valiantly, taking no care for my safety, so long as he pays my price. Not a day, hour, minute, second, longer."

This last sentence was said with an emphasis which seemed to show that the speaker was thoroughly in earnest. The colonel was inclined to think that he might prove to be an acceptable rascal.

"I do not know," he said, "how much you gleaned of my business, when you were hugging the door-post, but if you do not know it already, it is as well you should know now that it is mighty dangerous business."

The man laughed softly and rubbed his hands roughly together, as if he were crushing something fragile between the palms.

"So much the better," he chuckled; "I like dangerous businesses. They tickle the heart and purge the body of sullen humours. Pray, sir, continue."

The colonel, thus adjured, told the man what he had already told his predecessors in the growing company; namely, that the time of service was short, that unquestioning obedience in the full military sense was the first condition, and that the colonel was prepared to pay the

price he had already promised to Gascoyne and his companions.

The man looked not a little dashed when he heard of the shortness of time for which his services would be required, but his face brightened up again as he learned of the munificent spirit in which the colonel proposed to reward his followers. His satisfaction increased when he was told that the colonel's tale of men was not complete, and he pledged himself to bring to the next muster some stout fellows of like kidney with himself, who would be sure to satisfy the colonel's exigencies.

The colonel appointed the same time and place on the following day for meeting that had already been arranged with Gascoyne, van Poop and Goupillot, and the pair were about to part when the colonel reminded himself that he was not as yet possessed of his new acquaintance's name or nationality. He put his questions accordingly, and the man answered him with an air of great candour.

His name, it seemed, was Gaspard Penhoec. He was the son of a Breton settler in Canada and of an Indian woman. His father, who had been a *coureur de bois*, begot him in the year 1620, and his first knowledge of war began with the siege of Quebec, in the defence of which, for all his youth, he played his small part, being employed in the shifting of piles of cannon-balls. His father was killed in the siege. His mother was already dead. After the fall of the city, Master Gaspard lived for awhile in the woods with some friends of his father that were *coureurs de bois*, like him. By the time he was nearly twenty, the chance offered for him to visit Europe, and he made his way to Brittany, to his father's native place, but failed to find any existing relatives there.



Since then his time seemed to have passed in alternations of enlistment and desertion. It seemed probable to his listener, though the speaker did not confess as much in set terms, that he had occasionally eked out his terms of military service with robbery on the highway. The result of all these changes and chances was a man as tough as if he had been built of steel and leather, who was untroubled by any scruples or moralities, and who was ready for any undertaking.

The colonel listened with grave attention to this narrative, which might or might not be true, but which, on the whole, he was inclined to credit. There was nothing unlikely in it, and Penhoec seemed very much the kind of man that such a training would have created. He certainly seemed a capable fellow, and the colonel promised himself to see to it that he proved obedient.

Colonel Lane wished Penhoec good day, and proceeded to make his way homewards, mighty well satisfied with his morning's work, and his swelling muster. "I think," he said to himself, with a smile, as he neared his lodgings, "I have had adventures enough for one day." Here, however, he was mistaken, for the best adventure of all was yet to come.

## CHAPTER XVIII

### WILLEMYN

**Y**OUNG Mistress Willemyn Yeoman was the proclaimed beauty of Breda. She owed her beauty to her Dutch mother, as she owed her health and strength to her English father. When Peter Yeoman in the long ago came overseas with the resolute determination to make a fortune, if he could, he prided himself very much upon his sturdy matter-of-fact British common sense, which he believed, very rightly, to be his best weapon in his battle with the world. But for all he was so practical, his common sense did not prevent him from falling in love, as romantically as any Italian, with the beautiful daughter of a wealthy merchant.

Master Peter, in those days, was a youth of pleasing appearance, and a straightforward manner that went far to commend him to maidens. Being always brisk in action, when once he had made up his mind, Master Peter saw no reason why he should keep his passion a secret from the lady of his flame. He told his love, and was listened to with a qualified approval. The beautiful young lady was scarcely less matter-of-fact than her English lover. She liked him well, amazingly well; had he been but a rich man, she would have given him an instantaneous yes. As he was not a rich man, the best she could find to say to him was, that if he became a rich man, or even a moderately rich man,

within a reasonable space of time, she would jump into his arms. In a word, she agreed to wait for him for two years.

By the end of the two years, Master Peter, if he had not precisely made his fortune, had made a good deal of money, and was in a fair way to make a great deal more. Further, he had had the good fortune to attract the attention and command the admiration of his sweetheart's father, by the proofs he had shown of his business capacity, energy and cool daring. Master Peter believed himself to be in a position that justified him in proposing himself as a suitor for the young lady's hand, and his belief was confirmed by the conduct of the parent. He, while admitting with characteristic Dutch frankness, that he had expected, in his prosaic dreams, a more substantial suitor for his daughter, was willing to confess that the young Englishman had shown an amount of promise which might be acceptably discounted into terms of performance.

To make a long story short, Peter Yeoman married the maid, and, his luck availing, more than justified his acceptance. Peter Yeoman became, in his wife's lifetime, one of the richest men in Breda. After her passing, Master Peter, fighting his sorrow, applied himself to his business with such a furious zeal that in a few years he found himself recognized as easily the richest and the most important citizen in Breda. But of all his riches, he counted his highest treasure to be his daughter Willemyn.

Willemyn was as lovely as her mother, and, though her father had no other comeliness than the comeliness of robust health, she had inherited this quality and blended it with the rare maternal beauty, so that the

living result made her the very star of Breda in the eyes of amorous manhood. Her hair was very yellow; her eyes were very blue; her complexion was as smooth and as soft and as fair as it is permissible for human complexions to be; and her figure, although, indeed, of the Dutch plumpness, seemed to own certain qualities, at once of tautness and elasticity, that might be attributed to her English blood.

Such as she was and however she was, she was the idol of the bachelors of Breda. Citizens and strangers, native Dutchmen and alien foreigners, all were at one in a common devotion to the adorable creature who typified to the indigenous the perfection of Low Country loveliness, and who incarnated, to the English colonists, all that was most desirable in English maidenhood. She had many men in her acquaintance, and every man was her lover. It seemed impossible for a promising springald to come into her presence without being conquered all of a sudden by her vivid beauty, by her brisk vitality, by her blithe humour and her fierce imperiousness. She was a young woman always accustomed to have her own way, and Circe was not more despotic to her subjects.

It is to be noted, in passing, that in the number of the pretty girl's sanctioned, approved or tolerated adorers, the out-at-elbows courtiers of his Majesty King Charles the Second were not included. Master Peter looked upon those gentlemen with no little disfavour and with still more contempt. That a man should be poor was not in itself to Master Peter's mind a proof that he deserved condemnation. Master Peter had been poor himself, and remembered the fact, and he did not frown upon the poverty of a lad like Gascoyne, or deny him the

privilege of sometimes touching his daughter's hand. The poor man may become a rich man — Master Peter had his own good reason for knowing the truth of this statement — and Master Peter felt delightfully confident that his daughter would never be the girl to waste a serious sigh upon any suitor who was not prosperous among the prosperous. But the gentlemen that were in waiting upon the exiled king were folk of a very different kind, in Master Peter's judgment. They hung in beggary at the heels of a beggared master. Had they been as wealthy as they were now wretched, indeed, Master Peter would not have welcomed them. They were, in his eyes, rakehells, profligates, spendthrifts; no intimates for him and his. But, as they were poor as well as profligate, and likely to remain so, they were scarcely admitted to exist by the Burgomaster, and the Burgomaster's daughter knew little or nothing of them.

Not even Willemyn herself, or the most loverish lad in Breda, could dwell more enthusiastically upon the girl's charms and graces than did Master Peter Yeoman, her father. While he could not admit that she was as beautiful as her mother, though, as a matter of fact, she was really more beautiful, she recalled to him her mother, and his love for her, and the goodly days of his youth, when he was piling up ducats to buy his desire. To Willemyn herself, Willemyn was an exquisitely pretty girl, for whose pleasure mirrors were specially invented, a girl whose opulent father could find no better use for his money than to adorn her person. To the moon-calves, she was Venus, Hebe, Helen; she should have been an immortal goddess, and was only made mortal by a happy blunder, to enrich the world. But to her father,

she was more than an exquisitely pretty girl, for whom it was his privilege to buy jewels and costly clothes; to him she was more than any heathen goddess or pagan fair; his worship of her was little less than a kind of religion. As in his sturdy manhood he had gathered gold for a woman's sake, so, in spite of his staggering affluence, he continued to sow richly, and to reap plentifully, in order that Willemyn might be the richest heiress and the most pampered poppet in Breda. Whenever Master Peter seemed to be hugging his wealth, he was really hugging the image of his delightful child.

It is scarcely surprising that, under these conditions, the delicious Wellemyn grew up into as skittish and conceited a she-kitten as heart of idiot could desire. Her adorers were of many conditions, but she was ready for any man's adoration. There was a certain republican simplicity in the manners of Breda, which allowed people to meet on terms of equality in social intercourse, whose fortunes were widely sundered, and whose exchequers were of very different capacities. Thus, Willemyn found many poor young men and many rich young men within the range of her acquaintance. Perhaps she was so wealthy herself, and so accustomed to wealth, that she took it for granted; certainly she showed no greater favour to her rich admirers than to her poor ones. On the other hand, it must be admitted that she was no kinder to her poor admirers than to her rich ones. She treated all alike, with the same insolence, indifference, and capriciousness. Master Gascoyne, that had scarce a penny, was no worse served, and no better, than Mynheer Piet van Poop, whom even Peter Yeoman admitted to be a person of considerable means. And the more insolent, the more indifferent, and the more ca-

precious the maiden showed herself to be, the more desperately, ardently, doggedly did her wooers pursue her, and the more rhapsodically did they proclaim to the sun and stars her manifold perfections.

The mere fact, therefore, that her name flowered for a moment, however lightly and indirectly, upon the lips of Charles, was sufficient to vex Breda's Burgomaster into a fierce irritation, which he immediately betrayed in the tones, if not in the words, of his speech, and, indeed, in his whole bearing. In any business dealing, Master Peter prided himself, and rightly, upon his never-to-be-ruffled calm; though gain or loss of millions were dinging about his ears, the business would find him still imperturbable. But his daughter was another matter, and so he scowled, and so he growled.

Charles saw the effect that his words had had upon Master Peter, and he smiled amiably, as he hastened to allay the elder's annoyance.

"Good Master Peter," he protested, "be not so touchy. Do you indeed believe me to be so dissolute a reprobate that I cannot so much as breathe a girl's name without some smirching thought? Oh, Master Peter, Master Peter, if you knew my mind, you would be sure that I nourished no dishonest thought upon any woman in the world. If I permitted myself to speak of your daughter, whom I can scarcely claim the honour to know, at all, it was for a reason which, with your permission, I will make clear."

Master Peter, somewhat mollified by the manner of the young prince, wagged his head in token of acquiescence. Charles continued his discourse.

"There is, as you know, a young lady newly come to Breda, with whom, for a season, my unhappy fortunes

were closely linked. It is but natural that I, in my exile, in my loneliness, should desire to have as much joy in Mistress Jane Lane's society as may be."

Master Peter, with a softened countenance, smiled an understanding of his tenant's case. Charles went on with his argument.

"If I were to judge by no more than your manner to me but now, I should be well aware that I carry a bad name. And even if it were otherwise, a man that calls himself a king, and that would, were Heaven willing, have been indeed a king, cannot without envious or hostile comment, frequent the society of a young lady for whom he has the deepest regard. What I wish, therefore, to propose to you, Master Peter, is that you should consent to permit your daughter to be the daily companion of Mistress Jane Lane during her stay in Breda."

Master Peter pursed his lips for a soundless whistle, and looked very thoughtful. He began to understand the drift of Charles, and to approve it.

"If," Charles continued, "I were King of England, I should reward Mistress Lane and her brother, as royally as I might, for their service to me in aiding my flight. In like fashion, if ever I have the power, I promise to reward your daughter, by giving her such title and standing, as her kindness would deserve. In the meantime, Mistress Lane is an English lady of birth and breeding, to whom it should only be a pleasure for your daughter to act as a companion. Her doing so will make it possible for me to taste the frequent joy of Mistress Lane's society."

Master Peter marvelled in his heart that any human being could be found, king or no king, who could really feel interest in any other woman, so long as Willemyn



Yeoman was hard by. Yet he was relieved too, in spite of his obsession, by the knowledge that Charles professed no interest in his daughter. Otherwise, who knows but that the maid might be willing to marry with a king's son, just because he was a king's son, a horrible thought to the practical mind of the Burgomaster of Breda. The love of riches had so long been fostered in his life, that though his daughter would be fabulously wealthy, he shivered at the thought of her marrying any man that would not materially increase the vastness of the fortune at her command. Weighing all things, therefore, he could see little or nothing to object to in the prince's proposal, and in his slow way prepared to say as much.

Charles, however, was in no mood for slowness of speech or action. As soon as he gathered that Master Yeoman gave his agreement to the proposition, an agreement that Charles had never for a moment doubted that he should receive, he descended upon his visitor with the vehemence and velocity of a whirlwind. He had the worthy Burgomaster out of his chair in a jiffy. A lusty shout brought Ettington from the antechamber into the royal presence, where he received instructions to wait upon Mistress Lane with a request from Charles for audience. Then, slipping his arm under that of Master Peter, he piloted him down the many flights of stairs at a brisk pace, and when he had conducted him to the street-door, he whisked him along merrily in the direction of his dwelling.

Master Peter was of a healthy and vigorous ripeness; the high living of his Dutch existence had not sapped the solid strength of constitution which he had carried with him as his chief asset to the Low Countries in the long ago, and Charles was well aware of his companion's

soundness of wind and limb, or he would not have made him trip so nimbly. But Charles was all impatience for the fulfilment of his plan, and his anxiety and alacrity were the occasion of no little amazement to not a few sober citizens of Breda, who beheld with amazement the spectacle of their respected Burgomaster, racing along the streets on the arm of a jolly black-haired young giant, who was jabbering and laughing all the time, as he tore by with his companion.

## CHAPTER XIX

"I GREW ACQUAINTED WITH MY HEART"

THE best of Colonel Lane's adventures on that memorable morning did not, on the face of it, seem to be very much of an adventure after all, or even to be considered as an episode worthy of the high-sounding title of adventure. If a gentleman enter a room with the confident expectation of finding one lady awaiting him there, and that lady his sister, and discovers, ere the door closes behind him, that he is in the presence of two ladies, one of whom is, indeed, his sister, and one of whom he has never seen before, can that trivial occurrence be maintained in any serious sense to constitute an adventure? The answer depends upon the sequences of the meeting.

When Colonel Lane walked into the room where he expected to find his sister, his expectation was fulfilled. But, somewhat to his surprise, his sister was not alone. There was another girl in the room, a younger woman than Jane, and of a very different seeming, who appeared, in spite of the fact that she was a stranger, to be already on very friendly terms with Mistress Lane. The stranger was very fair-haired and very blue-eyed, and her skin was very smooth, and her body was plump, and, in a word, the maid was amazingly pretty.

Jane Lane advanced towards her brother, with a smile at his obvious surprise.

"John," she said, "here is a young lady whom, though I have met her for the first time to-day, I am happy to count already among my friends." She turned towards the girl as she continued: "Mistress Willemyn Yeoman, this is my brother, Colonel John Lane."

Mistress Willemyn Yeoman, thus explained, blushed very prettily, dimpled very prettily, and dipped a very pretty curtsy. She knew very well the deadly effect of those early blushes and dimples, and unmasked her battery, with murderous intent, upon the new-comer whose appearance she had scarcely been given time to realize. All she knew was that here stood a man and a stranger. Any man was the fitting target for the arrows of her naughtiness, and a stranger, of the unquestioned gentility of Colonel Lane, was a most welcome apparition to a coquettish miss that had worn all her existing flirtations threadbare, hated the very names of all her adorers in Breda, and welcomed, as a Godsend, the opportunity of breaking an unfamiliar heart.

Under her discreetly lowered, demure eyelids, she shot a steady glance at the colonel, and suddenly felt a sharp pang strike her sophisticated little heart. For as she peeped, she realized, with swift intuition, that here was a being certainly out of her cognizance and probably out of her power to control. This tall, grave gentleman, with the smiling eyes and the resolute mouth, this tall, soldierly personage who saluted her with an unaffected ease that had nothing in it of the elaborate courtly, this tall brother of her new-made woman friend—the adjective came to her with every new consideration of his characteristics—plainly was of a very different individuality from each and all of the folk that made up the mob of her familiar lovers.

She thought, in one swift wheeling flash of reflection, of Piet van Poop, that was so consequential and overfed and lethargic; of Gallic Goupillot, that was so vain and apish; of the Englishman, George Gascoyne, that was so clumsily unmusical; of the other Englishman, Luke East, that was so dull and stumble-witted: she thought of these and of twenty other young fellows besides, with whom this chronicle has nothing whatever to do. As she so thought, she fitted each with his uncomplimentary cap, and with wholly unprincipled precision contrasted each of the unfortunate young gentlemen, most damnably to his disadvantage, with the new man. And all this quickness of comparison, this ruthlessness of judgment, within the few seconds between the discreet lowering of her eyelids and the no less discreet elevation of her eyelids.

Colonel Lane, for his part, wholly unconscious of the consideration he was accorded in the mind of the plump young woman with the fair hair, was tempted to swear a little, inwardly, at the young woman's presence. He was hungry after his morning's work, and he wanted his dinner. Above all, he wanted the company of his sister, and of his sister alone, that he might tell her of all he had accomplished, and of the curious chances of the day, and cheer her with intelligence of the progress of her scheme. And here was this patently pretty, but apparently no less patently silly, female — for Colonel Lane had been shrewd enough to appreciate the little manœuvres of Mistress Willemyn — who must, no doubt, as a guest be humoured, cosseted and coaxed, and whose presence would inevitably compel the colonel to keep silence just at the moment when he, who was ordinarily far from being a loquacious individual, was most

desirous of saying his say. However, since it looked as if there were no help for it, the young woman being there and apparently prepared to stand her ground, the good colonel swallowed his chagrin as best he might, and, hiding his disappointment with a bold face, saluted the young lady with all the cordiality that he could muster. In his heart he was asking himself how the devil she came there, and why.

He got an answer to both these questions a little later, when Jane came to his room, where he was cleaning himself for dinner, and told him of the royal forethought. Jane narrated the preliminary visit of Lord Ettington, bearing the request from Charles for permission to wait upon her. Then she told how this visit was speedily succeeded by the appearance of Charles himself, accompanied by Master Peter Yeoman and by Peter Yeoman's daughter. The King, it seemed, in his kindness, taking pity upon Jane's possible loneliness in Breda, had found a companion for her, a companion who promised, so Jane already believed, to prove a pleasant companion. Charles had managed to make it plain, and Jane in her turn made the matter plain to her brother, that the attendance of Mistress Willemyn upon Jane made it more feasible for his Majesty to be privileged with a share of Mistress Jane Lane's society.

Neither the brother nor the sister believed Charles to be a saint. Jane had heard many things and Lane knew many things which put such a proposition out of the question. Moreover, neither John Lane nor Jane Lane would have expected their King to be a saint. It was one of the unhappy results of the triumph of Puritanism that it made many decent, clean-minded and clean-lived people tolerant of vices they abhorred naturally,

because, at least, those vices seemed to be a kind of protest against what the Cavaliers, men and women, regarded as the hypocrisy of the Covenanters and their kind. It often happens thus, that ostentatious virtue is the cause of ostentatious vice.

But if neither the brother nor the sister believed Charles to be a saint, they both knew him to be an honourable gentleman, who would never offend the friends that had served him. Jane would have been willing, in all tranquillity of mind, to receive Charles's visits without feeling the need of any protection, and John Lane would have thought as Jane did in this matter. But both were grateful to Charles for showing that he knew the world's opinion of his character, and being at pains to safeguard Jane against that opinion.

Under these circumstances Colonel Lane was prepared to extend a more cordial welcome to young Mistress Willemyn than he had, at the first blush, been ready to offer. When the three were assembled again together in their living-room, the good colonel was at great care to be affable, and, wholly unintentionally, for he was the least vain of mortals, made it quite plain to the maiden that his politeness was laboured, and, in a sense, reluctant. Here was a new, an astounding experience for petted, pampered Mistress Willemyn. All her life, all her life that is since she had learned to appreciate the severance of the sexes, she had been accustomed to the homage of mankind as far as she knew it. She had learned to believe that for a young man to look on her was for that young man to love her, and, indeed, she was justified in her belief by the unfailing adulation which had been laid at her dainty feet by each and all of the young gentlemen with whom she had come in

contact in the course of her twenty summers. Rich or poor, clever or stupid, high-born or of humble birth, dark or fair, short or tall, every youth of her acquaintance was her humble and professed slave, whom it was her delight to tease and humiliate and exasperate to the top of her bent. The more she was sure of a youth's devotion, the more she found a pleasure in punishing him for his flame.

But now, to her astonishment, she found herself, for the first time in all her short and sweet experience of life, face to face with a male being of presentable appearance and of relative youth, who appeared to regard her, not as a divine creature to be flattered and fawned upon, but as a somewhat unwelcome intruder. When Colonel Lane first stood in the doorway, Willemyn's skittish little heart began to thump delightedly at the immediate prospect of a new bondsman. So, when she found that, instead of sipping the delicious syrup of adoration, she was drinking deep of the bitter potion of indifference, she could have watered the distasteful cup with unfamiliar tears. Inwardly she chafed, inwardly she raged; inwardly she told herself that she detested this gaunt, ungainly, elderly fellow that was so boorish in his behaviour. But even while she thus reviled her enemy, as she held him, she knew very well, in her heart, that the man was neither ungainly nor boorish, and she was furious with herself for being too sure of this to be able to argue the point. At all events, it was clear to her that there was only one thing she could do. She owed it to her honour, she owed it to her fame, to spare no pains of guile or enticement that might serve to bring this churlish personage at last to



the place where he ought to have flung himself at first, namely, at her toes.

Colonel Lane was hungry after his morning's work; also Colonel Lane was thirsty. Colonel Lane wanted his dinner, and was more directly interested in its appearance than in the appearance of the amiable young lady. Colonel Lane was at no time particular about his food, and was now ready to eat anything that might be set before him, but it so happened that the meal which Jane smilingly offered to him was a very excellent one. John's man and Jane's maid between them were quite capable of preparing an eatable dinner under more difficult conditions than those that environed the visitors to Breda, but there was a novelty about the present feast that was due to alien aid. Master Peter Yeoman, always desirous of obliging and impressing strangers from England, and especially strangers who, like the Lanes, had evidently some command of money, had been at the pains to send over his cook with directions to instruct and aid the Lane's domestics in the preparation of a proper Dutch dinner. He had supplemented this thoughtfulness with an offering of certain jars of conserves, boxes of dried fruits, and home-made cakes, together with a couple of flasks, the one of ancient wine and the other of excellent brandy. The colonel rubbed his hands at the sight of the goodly fare, breathed a brisk, soldierly blessing, and set to work with a will.

Colonel Lane, though he had a healthy appetite, ate discreetly and drank soberly. In this regard he was as Puritan as you please. The little English-Dutch girl, familiarized with the liberality of the native living, was pleased by the fastidiousness and decorum of the colonel's

table-carriage, and added another item to the growing sum of her admiration. It seemed to her that the colonel used his platter and beaker with a decenter address than any man she had ever seen eat at meals, and the little fire of approbation that had begun to blaze upon the foolish altar of her heart was fanned to a glow, even by such trivial appreciations as these.

Colonel Lane, unthinking and unheeding, ate and drank to his reasonable need, without any idea that his conduct either was, or deserved, to be applauded. It was to his credit that he seldom or never thought about himself. He knew that he existed, and, because he existed, held a certain creed and certain beliefs, dependent thereupon; and he had learned manly graciousness from a noble mother and a noble sister. But these things were part of his being, and it would have amazed him beyond phrase if he could have been assured that they kindled any feeling of appreciation in an unfamiliar, every-day, fair-haired, blue-eyed child.

He was, therefore, perfectly amiable to the girl, as became a gentleman at the head of his own table, and he quite successfully concealed any show of his hearty wish that the girl were comfortably at home in her father's house. For he appreciated and was grateful for Charles's forethought, and realized how much his precaution might mean in the eyes of people who did not understand Jane Lane or John Lane or Charles. But he would much sooner have eaten alone with Jane, and been able to talk to her freely about their plans.

And all the while little Mistress Willemyn, new to being treated with polite indifference, was discerning new charms and discovering new merits in the simple-minded and simple-mannered Englishman. From the

first she had liked Jane Lane, recognizing in her, with native shrewdness, certain very precious qualities of womanhood that never are too common. And from the first she found that she liked Colonel Lane, who seemed to her as uncommon as his sister, and who piqued her vanity to the quick by his grave and gracious ignorance of her own intolerable charm.

## CHAPTER XX

### EN ROUTE

THE next eight and forty hours were forty-eight hours of busy, active life for Colonel John Lane, for they were those hours of his honest and loyal life which he devoted to the completion of his plan, or, indeed, it should rather be said the completion of his sister's plan, for amending the King's fortunes. But, in spite of all his occupation and pre-occupation, the valiant soldier was not so engrossed that he could fail to notice that in those same hours he saw a good deal of the society of Mistress Willemyn Yeoman. It was true, indeed, that in accordance with the design of King Charles, and the consent of Master Peter, the presence of Willemyn at the lodgings of the brother and sister was little less than a necessity under the conditions. Colonel Lane was unavoidably so much abroad making ready for that journey of whose inevitability he had informed the King, the journey which Charles had accepted with the completest lack of curiosity. All that Charles desired in that epoch of his life was to be as much in the company of Jane Lane as possible. As it was recognized on all hands that the royal desire was only made feasible by the consistent presence of Master Peter's daughter, it was only natural that Colonel Lane should, on his outgoings and his in-goings, be, as he

himself ungallantly expressed it, always stumbling over the Burgomaster's daughter.

The odd thing was that Mistress Willemyn seemed rather to enjoy than otherwise this process of being stumbled over. Instead of taking pains to get out of the way of the busy colonel, who always treated her with the most attentive courtesy, and always thought of her, when he thought of her at all, with the most complete carelessness, the young lady seemed to be positively anxious to cross the colonel's path, and to compel his regard as often as she reasonably or unreasonably could. In fact, the jade was aflame with admiration of the comely presence of the soldier and with indignation at the soldier's obvious indifference to her proclaimed charms. He had never an appraising eye for her; he took her presence for granted as tranquilly as if she were some pet cat or dog; and as he was a humane man of a gentle disposition, he showed no more signs of annoyance when Willemyn got in his way than he would have done if Pompey or Tibb had done so. Here was a condition of things to which Willemyn was wholly unused, and it rendered her furious. At first she thought to better things by displaying overt marks of disdain and even dislike of the colonel. But as this only seemed to satisfy the man by relieving him of any further need to pay her such little attention as he did pay, the girl changed her tactics in a rage, and took to supplicating an unconscious hunter.

Jane, of course, understood from the first what the little rascal was about, and Jane was vastly diverted by the lass's strategies. She knew her brother so well that she realized how pathetically impotent were the wiles of the little would-be Circe of Breda. Here, at

least, she had encountered one man who would never consent to be changed into any image of obedient beast, swine, ass or ox, for all her conjurations. Yet if Jane laughed, though never unkindly, at the folly of the girl, she was also not a little sorry for her. She had liked Willemyn at once, being quick to reach character and quick to classify strangers as friends or foes to her nature, and she liked her better already, in spite of her patent foolishness, pettiness, perversities, vanities, and extravagances. Jane had listened, with amazing patience, to a roll-call of the girl's lovers, as long as the Catalogue of the Naval Levy against Troy, and she was tickled by the girl's instantaneous determination, the moment that Colonel Lane came into her ken, to add him to the number of her victims. Jane could have told her at once how useless the effort would be; but Jane knew, in her heart, that the warning would be equally useless, and so she held her peace, and observed, with quiet diversion, the little comedy that was daily played before her of the pertinacious wooer and the unconscious wooed.

The unconscious wooed was, indeed, mightily absorbed in the prosecution of his immediate business. While little Willemyn was thinking about him, and imprecating his insolent indifference, and devising new schemes for attracting his attention and inflaming his regard, Colonel Lane was as busy as busy could be. That private room in the "Long Leopard" was still his council chamber, whither he repaired daily to review his growing forces. Already he had mustered all the men he needed for the actual carrying out of his proposed raid on English soil. Of the young men of his first morning, Gascoyne and Goupillot had kept promise.\* Each Castor had produced

a triple Pollux, each David a threefold Jonathan, each Robin three Richards. Only Mynheer Piet van Poop had failed to bring with him his triplicate. His friends, it seemed, were all too easy-circumstanced and easy-going and easy-minded to sniff at the scent of adventure, and, of course, it was out of the question to think that such wealthy young gentlemen were to be tempted by the pay that Colonel Lane could offer. Mynheer van Poop was willing to embark on the enterprise because he was in love with Willemyn, and because he was a friend of Gascoyne's. His wealthy associates shared his love for Willemyn, but not his friendship for Gascoyne, and were not to be moved. However, as van Poop observed good-humouredly, he really was broad enough and round enough to count for three, and might so be considered as doing his duty.

Van Poop's failure was, however, squared, for the hybrid Penhoec, half Breton, half Redskin, brought with him a rabble of tough customers, like himself, that carried a sea-faring manner. Colonel Lane soon got rid of the bulk of this company, much to the disgust and disappointment of Penhoec, a disgust and disappointment, however, that he did his best to stomach with an air of unconcerned good-humour. The discarded gentry were the kind of fellows that might please a pirate or a privateer in a hurry to replenish his crew with the earliest bad-blooded scoundrels to hand. Colonel Lane's purposes being different, he dismissed the rogues with great rapidity. He retained three out of Penhoec's rally, and he retained them, curiously enough, for three reasons. In the first place, they were decidedly the best of a bad bunch. In the second place, he did not wish to waste more time in hunting up recruits, and he had,

from the beginning, decided upon fifteen as the limit of his levy, including himself. In the third place, it had been Colonel Lane's expressed wish that, as far as possible, his recruits should be able to speak or to understand English, and Penhoec's men fulfilled this condition. One was an Englishman from the midlands, two were from the American Colonies; all three were deserters from ships that they had served, and had made their way inland to get work upon the Breda quays. They were of a lower type, as they were of a lower grade, than the rest of Colonel Lane's little regiment of adventurers, but they seemed sturdy and vigorous, and Penhoec vouched for their obedience and trustworthiness. Colonel Lane took Penhoec's vouchment for what it was worth, tested the men with a few questions, believed that under observation they might prove serviceable ruffians, and accepted their services. Each of the fellows had his story to tell, which he told sheepishly enough, of how he came to be there, and to each of these stories Colonel Lane gave just the attention it was worth, which was exactly no attention at all. The past careers of his partizans had little concern for him: so long as they could afford him one useful week out of their lives for the work which he had set himself to do, that was all that he demanded of them.

Very quickly the day and hour came when Colonel Lane had to make a beginning of activities. It was arranged that he was to meet his fellowship at the nearest port where he would pick up a ship that would serve to convey them across the sea. His followers were instructed to proceed singly to the place of meeting, so as to avoid arousing suspicion, and not to assemble



until a certain appointed hour of night, when their gathering would be little noticeable.

These preliminaries being satisfactorily arranged, Colonel Lane had to take farewell of his sovereign and of his sister. Charles was very gracious to the colonel, whom he treated as a dear friend, and he wished him well in the private business in which Charles believed him to be engaged. The serenity of Jane's affection remained unshaken. She kissed him and clasped his hand with the confident assurance of one who was sure that he would do the work which he was setting about. Each of them was devoted to the other; both were devoted to the King and believed that no sacrifice could be too great that was made in his service. Both Jane and her brother felt that, even if Lane were to fail in his desperate adventure, fail utterly and hopelessly, even to the loss of his life, he would have done no more than his duty to the young man whom they called King of England.

Colonel Lane found, somewhat to his surprise, somewhat to his vexation, and somewhat to his amusement, that there was a third leave-taking to be dealt with. When Mistress Willemyn learned that the colonel was leaving Breda, though only for a few days and only on some small matter of private business, she made as much fuss as if she had known the colonel all her days, and now saw him departing on an expedition to the Land of Prester John. She urged him to be careful of his person, to be cautious in his choice as to the inns where he must lie, to have alert senses for the bed-linen, and to be ever on the look-out for footpads. Jane had showed no such solicitude as Willemyn now displayed

for the colonel's welfare, and though the colonel assured her somewhat curtly that he would take all necessary care of himself, the young lady was not to be lightly comforted, and even went so far as to threaten a mild attack of hysterics, which promised to accord exceedingly ill with her pleasing plumpness and general air of extreme well-being. This, however, was averted by a smile on the face of Jane and a frown on the face of the colonel, and also not a little by the fact that the girl really had not the least idea of how to display the necessary symptoms and consequent antics. So she contented herself with being a little tearful and very sweet and sympathetic in her bearing as she wished the colonel God-speed.

Leaving Jane in the calm that was natural to her fortitude, and Willemyn in the agitation that was unnatural to her egotism, Colonel Lane quitted Breda, and made his way to the appointed port. There, after a little trouble, he found the ship he needed, provisioned it according to his requirements. She was a Dutch ship that was named the *Gander*. He furnished her with a sufficient store of weapons, which he caused to be conveyed secretly on board under the cloak of a merchant's cargo. Then, with a dark, clear night, came the colonel's opportunity. His adherents were soon rallied, and a little later he and his fellowship of adventurers were making, with a fair wind, for England.

## CHAPTER XXI

### THE KINGLY IMAGE

**C**OLONEL LANE was abroad on his adventures, ploughing salt water, or trampling sweet earth; his absence much thought upon by two women, little enough by any one else. Charles, who had no room in his mind for him or any soul else, save only one woman, would, indeed, have made room for the colonel, if he could but have known the business he was about. But Charles did not know, and there was an end. If, however, Charles thought very little about Colonel Lane, he thought mightily about Colonel Lane's sister, so that the credit of the family did not dwindle in the King's regard.

The spring morning had begun with rain and wind, but the wind had ebbed and the rain had ceased, and sunlight and soft air entered caressingly at the open window. Charles and his little Court had been together since they broke their fast, and Charles was wearying of their society and yearning for society elsewhere. Certainly the courtiers had been better tempered since the coming of the Lanes, and the consequent addition to the King's credit. If Charles would accept no tribute for himself from the faithful colonel, he was persuaded to let his followers gain something by the existence of a certain sum of money in the hands of Master Peter Yeoman.

Charles had been playing chess with Kingfisher who was a great hand at the game, and Charles had equalled him by two games out of four and was now marching to victory with the fifth, which was elating, if not all-sufficing. Ettington, Garlinge, Dawlish and Pippet had been busy with the cards and wholly absorbed in the petty squabbles, triumphs and despair, that follow upon those painted tools of fortune. As usual, Challis sat apart at his secretarial table, steadily plying his pen, and seemingly indifferent to all that went on around him. But for the fact, neither his fingers nor his wits were so engrossed but that the steady writer was able to watch the King from where he sat, and to note every expression upon the King's countenance, and to interpret it with remarkable accuracy, an accuracy that stirred emotions in the writer's breast, whereof his impassive countenance showed no sign.

The pen scratched, and the cards fell, and the chessmen moved this way and that, and the clock ticked, and the rain waned, and the wind fell. "Checkmate!" cried Charles cheerfully. Kingfisher, knitting his brows, had to admit the royal triumph, and as if in compliment of the King's victory the stronger sunlight without threw its gold upon the floor of the room prodigally, and the birds in the trees and eaves set up their pæan for serene air.

The change in the weather suggested to the King a desirable change of companionship. He turned and looked somewhat disdainfully at his busy companions.

"Well, gentlemen," he said, "the sun is pleased to shine upon us. If you have any outdoor occupation to divert your leisures, pray set about it, for at the moment I would sooner have your room than your company."

Dawlish rose, and made him a half-mocking salutation. "Say no more, Sire," he said. "Your Majesty is so seldom tempted to reflection, that no one of us, even the most feather-headed, would vex your good intention."

Garlinge caught Lord Ettington by the arm. "I am your man or any one's at a match of rackets," he suggested. Ettington shook his head.

"I thank you," he said decisively; "I am playing a love game this matins, a wench in a den, a pearl in a midden." Pippet caught at the offer, and addressed Garlinge. "I'll take you," he cried, "for a stake."

"My black and gold habit," Garlinge suggested. Pippet made a grimace. "'Tis not a little rusty," he averred. "Well," he added, "I will meet it with my rose-ring that lacks two stones."

Then the five merry gentlemen went noisily out, and Mr. Secretary, that was seldom merry, accompanied them quietly.

When the King was quite sure that he was alone, he went to the open window, and leaned out of it. As he did so, he whistled cheerfully a few bars of a Royalist tune. Then he returned to his table, and began to write, but it was evident that his mind and his heart were not with his work, that he was waiting for something, for someone. Presently the sound of a light voice singing in the room beneath him was heard. In a moment Charles had leapt to his feet, and catching up a couple of books that lay on a table hard by, had thrust them under his arm, where he gripped them securely. In another moment he descended the stairs to the storey below. In a third he was tapping at a door, and in yet another he was in the presence of Mistress Jane Lane, who welcomed him gladly. Pretty Willemyn was in

the room; pretty Willemyn made the King her deepest curtsey. Pretty Willemyn would have been more simple than she seemed if she had not long since read the King's mind, and guessed the road to royal favour. She remained in the room; such was her understood duty; but she retired to the furthest corner of it, and discreetly absorbed herself in needle-work.

Jane also made her visitor a reverence, which he interrupted.

"Sire," she began, but Charles protested.

"Jane, upon your honour as a subject I forbid you to think of me, to speak of me, by a foolish title that may never be mine. I am Charles to you, now and always. Remember."

Jane looked at him gratefully. "I can never forget your Majesty's condescension," she said.

"Oh, damn my Majesty's condescension," Charles cried petulantly. "It is you that concede if you stoop to welcome so out-at-elbows a fellow."

Jane only laughed, and glanced at the volumes that Charles carried under his arm. Charles placed the books upon the table. He took up one, and opened at the title-page. "This," he said, "is the book of which I spoke to you, the book in which I read much, the book from which I sometimes believe that I learn much that might be of use to me, if I ever were other than I am."

Jane, standing by Charles's side, looked upon a strangely engraved title-page. Thereon, the giant figure of a man, whose arms and body were curiously composed of diminutive figures of men closely massed together, showed itself from the waist behind a range of mountains. The fantastic figure carried a sword in its right hand, and a crozier in its left, which it seemed to extend,

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as if in protection, over the presentment of a noble city. Beneath this effigy hung a kind of curtain, between panels of allegorical images, and on the curtain were these words: "Leviathan, or the Matter, Forme and Power of A Commonwealth, Ecclesiasticall and Civil, By Thomas Hobbes of Malmesbury."

Charles laid the book upon the table again. "It is not gay reading," he said, "and the lads laugh at me for wasting my time over it. But, indeed, I have found wisdom in its pages, and because you are wiser than most women, it may afford you some pleasure."

"Please, Sire," Jane protested, "do not call me a wise woman, or I must needs believe that your Majesty takes me for a witch."

"Belike I do," Charles responded, with a sudden gravity, which Jane, for some reason of her own, seemed desirous to dispel. She glanced inquiringly at the second volume that Charles had brought with him, and Charles hastened to answer her unspoken question. He took up the book and handled it tenderly.

"Here," he said, "is a book, with which, it may be, you are already familiar."

He handed the book to Jane as he spoke, and the girl saw at once that it was the "Eikon Basilike." The girl gave a little sigh. "The Kingly Image" was a very precious book at Bentley, deeply revered, often read, always honoured. She touched the brown covers tenderly.

"Your Majesty," she said, "could not, for sure, think me such a laggard in love for your house as to be a stranger to these words of your sainted father's."

Charles smiled somewhat wistfully. "There are times," he said, and there was a rueful note in his voice

as he spoke, "when I could wish that my sainted father had begotten a more saintly son."

Jane shook her head in sign of friendly dissent. In her heart of hearts she found The Son of The Man quite saintly enough. She revered the martyr king, but in all honesty the living prince was more to her liking.

Charles continued. "Yet I doubt, sweet lady, if you have seen such a copy as this." He took the volume from her as he spoke, and quickly fluttered the leaves. "For this is the first copy of the first edition, that ever fell from the press, within a few hours of the murder at Whitehall. There are signs of hurry in its pages, for it contains certain errors and blemishes, due to heedless printing, and here is one which has always seemed to me to be exceeding pathetic."

He had found the page that he had been seeking by this time, and he held the book open before him, but in such a way that Jane could not see the printed page.

"What I sought was in those words which it pleased my beloved parent to address directly to me, in those noble and tender words in which he wrote thus: 'I had rather you should be *Charles le Bon*, than *le Grand*, good than great.' The fine wish of a fine soul."

"The fine wish of a fine soul." Jane echoed his words earnestly, and wondered what he would be at.

"Yet here," Charles continued, "in this little passage, it has pleased Master Printer, by the alteration of a single letter, to make a mighty change in the meaning."

He held the open book before Jane, so that she could see what he pointed to with his finger, while he still spoke.

"You see, that he has printed not '*Charles le Bon*' as it should be, but '*Charles le Bow*,' which, so far as the



sound goes, makes as good French, but, as far as the significance goes, is a very different matter. My dear father would never have wished it that I should be known rather as Charles the Comely than as Charles the Great, but so the printer has been pleased to shape it. Is it not a whimsical miscarriage?"

He laid the book down upon the table and looked steadfastly at Jane as he spoke. She looked no less earnestly at him. Pretty Mistress Willemyn, seeing them absorbed in their talk, and wishful to show herself wise Mistress Willemyn, took admirable advantage of their abstraction. She had placed herself discreetly, at the beginning of the interview, very near to the further door that conducted to the inner rooms of the apartment. Now, silently and quite unnoticed, she rose, and passing noiselessly through that door, disappeared.

"It is indeed," Jane said slowly, "a curious blunder for a man to make in such a book and at such a time."

"I do not think that it can have been done on purpose," Charles went on, "for it would have lacked all aptness. I cannot flatter myself that I have ever been esteemed handsome. Why, my mother used to laugh, they tell me, at her 'black baby.'"

Jane did not quite know what to say, and therefore said nothing. Ever since the days when she had ridden with Will Jackson, she had thought one man's face the finest in the world, and she thought so still.

Charles drew a little nearer to her, and there was a change in his manner which Jane could not but note. There was an eagerness in his eyes, a tenderness in his smile, a suggestion of passionate appeal in his action and his glance, which thrilled and troubled, and delighted her.

"I should be well content," Charles said softly, "to let the word stand always as it stands there, if I thought that you might be persuaded to share the wish, if I thought that you could ever look upon poor Charles as Charles the handsome, and take him for that which he is not, rather than poor Charles the Great, which he can never be."

Jane seemed to shiver a little under the ardour of the young man's gaze. She drew back a pace and laughed constrainedly.

"I think," she said, with an effort to seem careless, "that your Majesty is very well as he is."

Charles frowned slightly. "I wish," he protested, "that you would not be-Majesty me, when I wish to talk to you, man to maid."

He dropped into a sudden silence, which Jane, on her side, made no attempt to break. She felt now, as she had felt sometimes on wild country walks in England, the sudden, unexpected sense of impending storm. Charles's gaze was no longer directed upon her, but wandered about the room. He seemed to be striving to shape the words he should say next. His roving glance fell upon the crystal that Jane had shown him on the day of her arrival. It stood now upon the table, poised in its stand of carved ebony. Charles looked at Jane with a cheerful smile, as if he had found what he sought.

"Sweet Mistress," he asked, "have you read any pictures of late in your magic crystal?"

Jane nodded, with a sense of relief at the change in his speech and his demeanour. Yet she was perversely conscious of regret, too, at the change.

"Indeed, yes, Sire," she answered, and turning to the

table, bent over the sphere, which showed dim to her, for she found that there were tears in her eyes.

"And have you seen aught there that was worth the seeing, Mistress Lane?" Charles persisted.

Jane nodded again. "I have seen the wide sea," she answered, "and a ship upon the sea, a ship that is carrying his crown to my King."

Charles laughed, with the boyish gaiety that always seemed at odds with his sorrows and the heavy lines upon his face.

"You will have to look a long time before you see that ship warp into dock," he cried, and there was a curious exultant note in his voice, while he spoke, as if he rejoiced in his certainty. He reached out his hand and took the crystal from its cup, and peered with a great show of seriousness at the shining globe. "Let me see if I cannot find some vision better worth the seeking."

"Do you see anything?" Jane asked. She forced herself to speak as gaily as Charles had spoken, but she knew that her body trembled, and she leaned against the table for support. To her fancy the storm was growing with amazing swiftness, and she strove to brace her nerves to meet it.

Charles looked up from the crystal with shining eyes. "I see wonders and marvels and joys," he cried exultingly. "I see the face of a foolish fellow illuminated with true knowledge." He paused for a moment, watching her.

"What do you mean?" she faltered.

"Love, Jane, love," Charles answered briskly, with a brighter smile than his dark countenance had worn for many a day. "The fellow I see in that crystal is a

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happy rascal at long last, for he has seen the fairest lady in Christendom, whose beauty makes him forget that he has ever sighed for the crown of an ungrateful kingdom." As he spoke, he caught Jane in his arms, and made to kiss her. She eluded him swiftly, and both rose to their feet, looking in each other's eyes.

Here was the threatened storm of whose approach Jane had been so certain, and so fearful. It had swept over the sky in an instant; it had broken forth with a vengeance; it had to be faced and fought against. It was surprising to her that she had been able to escape from the outstretched arms of her lover; she was amazed to find that she had found the strength to resist her lover's appeal. For he was her lover now, her declared lover, he who for so long had been in secret the beloved. The spirit of Love had suddenly revealed himself, and she felt as if she must perish before the revelation. She could scarcely think, she could scarcely speak, and yet she knew that she must think rightly and speak rightly.

"Sire, Sire, Sire!" Jane murmured faintly. Charles waved the title aside impatiently.

"There is no Sire here," he declared imperatively, "no subject, no more than man and maid, lover and lass. I am weary of this sham kingship that means nothing and leads nowhither. The sight of you has made me a true man. I love you. Will you be my wife?"

There was no mistaking his earnestness, his sincerity; but if the avowal of his love had been startling, the offer of marriage was yet more amazing. She strove to collect herself.

"Your Majesty," she said, with feigned reproof in her voice, "must remember that he is King of England."

"My Majesty remembers that he is nothing of the

kind," Charles answered impatiently, shaking his black locks away from his eager face. "He remembers that he is an outcast, an exile, a beggar, that he is tired of being all three. He knows what he knew when he skulked as Will Jackson, that he loves Jane Lane. Yes, you were only a slip of a girl then, Jane, but I loved you."

Jane flushed and paled and clasped her hands together nervously. Never did she think she could be so taken unawares. She could not speak, but her eyes widened with her wonder. Charles strove to dissipate her surprise.

"Why, what is there so strange in this? Did not my sister often speak of you as my wife?"

He asked the question triumphantly, but Jane shook her head. "That was in jest, Sire," she said.

"But I am in earnest," Charles answered vehemently. "Listen to me, Jane, be sensible. There is no hope of Restoration. I know it, have known it this long time. Take me for your mate and I swear I will do my best to be worthy of you, perhaps in the New World. Otherwise I must sink down to the dregs, drift to the garret or the ditch. Choose, Jane, choose, and save me. Will you be the wife of plain Charles Stuart?"

All the youthful eagerness and brightness that had so endeared him to her in the old days seemed to have returned to him. All the weariness that the drifting years of disappointment had weighed upon him seemed to have fallen away, to have restored hope and joyousness to his heart. Jane stared at him, loving, wondering, fearing. Charles loved her, Charles wished to make her his wife. It seemed to alter all the meaning of the world.

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Charles drew a little nearer to her, entreating her with his eyes, with his outstretched hands, with his pleading smile. She knew that he longed to clasp her in his arms and that she longed for his clasp.

Jane made a little gesture with her hands, as if to push her suitor from her, though she felt as if in the action she were pushing away a happiness too wonderful to credit.

"Sire, this is very sweet madness," she whispered.

"Very sweet sanity," Charles amended. "Jane, Jane, could you care for me a little?" His voice was very tender, very persuasive, and Jane had much ado to steel herself against its charm.

"I would serve your Majesty to the death," Jane answered, with a voice that trembled, in spite of her effort to keep it steady. Charles extended an imploring hand to her.

"Give me life," he pleaded, "give me your life. Answer me, 'I love you.' Answer me." Jane was silent for a moment, thinking many troubled thoughts, then, she said slowly:

"If you were plain Charles Stuart or plain Will Jackson, I might have much to say. But I must needs be tongue-tied before my King."

"Don't quibble, sweetlips," Charles whispered. "If you were sure, as I am sure, that never in all the evers I shall be King of England, or other than a wandering citizen of the world, worthy or worthless, as you may make him, what would you have to say to me?" Jane looked at him gravely.

"I must not tell you," she replied, "till I am as sure as you are that you will never be King of England."

"Why doubt my surety?" Charles asked eagerly. "I

am sick of hope deferred. I will have no more of it. To the devil and Monk, his lieutenant, with the kingdom that killed my father. Jane, Jane, why will you not give me your promise to marry me, go away with me from this pitiful place and these trivial ambitions, to an honest life across the ocean? Come, Jane, come!"

Jane protested. "Your Majesty—" she began, and Charles interrupted her with a reproving gesture. "Again!" he said. She corrected herself quickly. "Charles," she amended. Charles nodded approval. "That's much better." The girl began again. "Charles, you ask me a question so grave it should take a year of thought to respond, yet you expect an answer within a week."

"Within a minute," Charles said hotly. "Do you love me?"

Again the girl cried his name "Charles!" and said no more.

"Do you doubt my love?" Charles asked eagerly, and again the girl said "Charles!" and again was silent.

Charles entreated her. "Dear, my dear," he pleaded, and she trembled at the passion in his voice, "I would rather have your love than win all the kingdoms in the world, as well as that little island which will never be mine."

Jane shook her head.

"Sire, for a King there is no better thing than a kingdom." Charles answered her in her own manner.

"For a man there is no better thing than a good wife. I have lost my kingdom; it is gone as if it had never been. I might as well hope to reign in the moon as in England. I am an unhappy rascal, Jane; between you

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and me, it is possible that I shall always be a bit of a rascal, but you can make me a happy one. Will you, Jane?"

He looked at her very pleadingly, and the girl found it hard to answer him. "I love you, Charles," she said slowly, "and if I were sure, sure as I am of my love for you, that you would never come to your kingdom, I would take you at your word and be happy, and try to make you happy. But I am not yet sure that you will never come to your kingdom."

"I am sure," Charles said positively. "Be content with my assurance. Give me your hands, Jane; give me your lips, Jane; give me your life, Jane."

He pressed towards her impetuously. She put out a resisting hand and stayed him.

"Wait, wait, wait!" she cried. "I cannot answer you yet."

Charles halted, and regarded her with smiling eyes. "Why, Jane," he cried, "you shall never be taken by storm, but, indeed, there is no time like the present, for I am yours and you are mine, and there is no gain-saying it."

Jane looked fondly at the eager face, listened fondly to the eager voice, and knew in her heart that she longed to have Charles for her man and sacrifice the loyalty that would make him a King to the love that would make him her lover. But she struggled valiantly with the thought.

"Charles," she said tenderly, lingering over that dearest name, "I could never answer you like this. Even if you were free man as I am free maid, I must needs wait until my brother came home. We are over-great friends, my brother and I, to act apart."



It may well be that Jane exaggerated a little the interdependence of brother and sister, and that she knew very well that if she found a lover to her liking Colonel Lane would never grumble because he was not consulted. But she had to furnish some excuse for delay, and this seemed the readiest.

Charles made a good-humoured grimace. "Very well," he said, "I will accept your conditions if you will accept mine."

Jane looked at him in surprise. He was in wild high spirits and his voice was blithe with mirth.

"I must make conditions, too," he protested. "If you are pleased to put me off because I call myself a King, or, rather, because you are pleased to call me a King, for I call myself one no longer, why, then, it follows that I am a King to you, and may impose my wishes."

Jane swept him a curtesy. Mirth seemed easier to handle than passion. "What are your Majesty's commands?" she asked, with a great show of deference.

"Why, these," Charles answered. "We will wait as you will till your brother returns, that we may ask his blessing, but, in the meantime, we are to be troth-plighted sweethearts, Will Jackson and Jane Lane."

He had drawn close to her as he spoke, and straightway, before she could protest or resist, he had caught her in his arms, and was kissing her and she was giving him back his kisses. It was only for a moment that Jane surrendered to the sweetness of the embrace. Then she strove to get free, but Charles would not loose her. She ceased to contest, trusting for freedom to guile rather than to force. She knew that Willemyn had not been in the room, and she had been glad of the knowledge. But she knew that the girl would be within call, and she did

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call for her loudly. Charles had no more than time to unclasp his arms and to skip back to a decorous distance from his hostess before Willemyn demurely entered the room.

"His Majesty," said Jane, with a smiling face, while Charles looked at her roguishly, "is taking his leave of us, and is wishful to bid you good-day."

## CHAPTER XXII

### OVERSEA

THE man that uses the sea in a ship of his own commanding, for some purpose of his own planning, is ever tempted to believe that his expedition is, if not superior to any sea-journey yet attempted, at least the peer of the best of them. There have been many and famous voyages in many and strange crafts; Noah in his ark, Danaë in her box, the Gotham sages in their bowl. The adventurer may think of these, of the comrades of Jason in the *Argo*, of the Princes Orgulous sailing in the black, swift ships to Troy, of the company of the *Ship of Fools*, of the voyagers to Vineland the Good, of the sailings of Sindbad, of Panurge and Columbus, of pious Æneas and Raleigh, and Hawkins, and many another merry gentleman-adventurer that furrowed the Swans' Bath of dreams or skimmed the veritable seas.

There was a man on board the *Gander* that discoursed a great deal in this fashion, but that man was not Colonel Lane. The man was Master Gascoyne, that had read a little in varied books, and liked to air his reading. There were some hours to spend on this vessel of destiny, and it behoved the fellowship to lighten them with tale and song, and Master Gascoyne was permitted, for a season, to pay his share in this fashion.

There was no carousing allowed, as Colonel Lane wished to command the best services of every man of

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his party. This caused some grumbling from Penhoec, who asserted roundly that nothing was worth doing that was not done with the aid of wine and strong waters. In this grumbling, the Canadian was warmly supported by his tray of friends, but the colonel was inflexible. He reminded the half-breed that this question of temperance had been one of the conditions of enlistment, that ample consolation awaited the abstainers at the "Long Leopard" on their return, and that any man who repented of his pledge was at perfect liberty to return to Holland then and there.

As the *Gander* was by this time many miles out to sea, Colonel Lane's affability was more apparent than real. Penhoec was inclined at first to persist, and he went so far as to produce a flask of Schnapps from his pocket, and apply himself to its contents. But never a sip wetted his lips, and this little attempt at insubordination was promptly checked. Colonel Lane briskly plucked the flask from his grasp and flung it through the port-hole, after which act he informed the gasping Canadian that he would take it upon himself to send the fellow after his bottle, if he gave any further trouble. Penhoec seemed for an instant tempted to resist, but he was quick enough to see that he could count on no support from the majority of the company, and accordingly gave way.

A sea voyage by night to men that are not professional seamen is not necessarily an exhilarating business. To one member of the fellowship indeed, to Jean-Marie Goupillot, this stage of the expedition—to accept the term—was dismal in the extreme. Before he had gone on board, and in the short time aboard before putting off, he had been voluble in nautical terminology, had propounded problems of shoals and winds which nobody

understood, and nobody wanted to answer or to have answered, and had paced the stable-deck of the *Gander* with the confident tread of a war-worn admiral. But the *Gander* had not been many minutes out to sea, before all this glib marine confidence vanished, and poor Goupillot, huddled in an obscure corner, moaned like a sick dog, and sighed for shipwreck. Penhoec grinned viciously at the humiliation of the man, who was in a sense, his compatriot; it seemed to divert him ghoulishly to see a stout fellow stranded. Even Goupillot's true friends and comrades among the little band seemed to be unable to realize other than the comic side of the condition to which the poor devil's queasy stomach had reduced him. But Colonel Lane found time to make him comfortable, lent him his cloak for an extra covering, and vouchsafed to him the privilege, unshared by any man else, of a long sip from a flagon of brandy. Seeing this, Penhoec showed his teeth in a silent snarl, that shifted into a smile when the colonel's regard turned, as if by accident, his way.

For the rest, the passage wore itself out endurably enough. All of the company were used to discomfort, none of them embarked in the expectation of being comfortable, or of straining a sail to the Island of Cytheræa, as Gascoyne poetically put it. They crowded together in the darksome little cabin, and those that lusted to do so, smoked, for this indulgence was not forbidden, and after a while, to pass the time, and to interrupt the flow of Gascoyne's erudite reflections, it was informally decided that each man should tell some story of his experiences in his wanderings through the world.

It soon proved that every man had something to tell that was worth the telling, and, in consequence, worth

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the hearing; everyone, that is, with the exception of Penhoec's party, who had nothing to say for themselves, or if they had, stubbornly declined to say it, and Penhoec himself, whose proffered fragment of autobiography proved to be too highly flavoured in its repulsiveness, even for an audience that could by no possibility be considered as squeamish. So the time wore on, with talk and tobacco below, and above the trampling of sailors' feet upon the deck, and all the commingled noises of ropes and sails, and spars, which make so bewildering a music in a landsman's ears. When all was said and done, it did not seem so very long after sailing before the captain of the *Gander* came below to say that land was in sight.

The coast of Kent affords a number of safe and pleasant harbours for such a small vessel as that same *Gander* which Colonel Lane now, for the time being, commanded, and none, very likely, more convenient for his purpose than the diminutive bay, called by the name of St. Mildred, which lies just below the ancient and honourable little village of Birchington. Birchington was small, Birchington was quiet, Birchington was sleepy. It depended, in a sense, upon its great house of Quex, as the vassal attends upon his master. Birchington fished, Birchington spun, Birchington raised its flocks and herded its cattle, and tended its flat, fat pasture-lands, and sowed its seed, and reaped its harvest with an enviable and perennial tranquillity. It was a local proverb to say of a well-to-do man that dwelt elsewhere in the Isle of Thanet, that he was as easy as if he lived in Birchington. In justice to the inhabitants of Birchington, it must be recorded that they did their best, very manfully, and very successfully, to live up to their long-established repu-

tation. To be born in Birchington was to be born, as it were, into a philosophic calm, to be privileged from inception to meet the world, and the world's rubs, with a mixture of stoicism and epicureanism that was very admirable to observe, and very difficult to acquire, except for one that was begotten in Birchington.

It will readily be appreciated, therefore, that Birchington was as unlikely a spot for the scene of a world-shaking enterprise as the fantastic mind of a humourist could have devised. Birchington thought much of its pilchards, and much of its wheats, and much of its fishing-nets, but of little else beside in the wheeling sphere to which it belonged, always and ever with the exception of the great house of Quex. Quex, to your true Birchingtonian, was not only a manor of manors, but the manor of manors. There it had stood, according to the brave Birchington tradition, from the dawn of time, a magnificent symbol of power, authority, and opulence. It had changed owners, indeed, since the days of Noah, since the days of Cæsar, since the days of William of Normandy, since the days of Harry the many times married, but always and ever, from the Ark to the Covenant, it had been Quex, and always and ever Quex it would remain. Kings might come, and kings might go; dynasties might fade, and princely lines might wither, but Quex had been Quex, was Quex, and would be Quex, with an unfaltering persistence to its own faith in itself, and an unfailing indifference to an unnecessary world beyond the confines of the Quex horizon. At the time of which this tale is told, the lord of the manor of Quex was a gentleman of the name of Smith.

On a certain evening of the sixth decade of the seventeenth century of the Christian existence of the village

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of Birchington, an event occurred which was to be of an epoch-making nature in the history of that grandly placid community. From a far-away port on an alien coast, a vessel that was named the *Gander* loomed out of the night, and came to her anchorage in waters that were happily on that occasion, for the voyagers in the *Gander* and for the later fame of Birchington, as calm as the annals of the village.

The arrival of a vessel at Birchington at that hour of the night was a thing unknown in the annals of Birchington, and under ordinary conditions there would have been no one astir and abroad to take note of her arrival. But the conditions were extraordinary, and there was a man astir and abroad that paced the beach of St. Mildred's Bay assiduously, as assiduously as he had paced it for more than one preceding night. As the *Gander* came within half a mile of the shore, piloted by Gascoyne, who knew every inch of the Thanet coast, a lighted lantern was run up to her mast-head. The twinkle of this new star over the sea was answered by the twinkle of a lantern on land that was instantly uncovered and waved aloft by the watcher in St. Mildred's Bay. Immediately the *Gander* hove to, dropped anchor, and rode at ease on the tranquil waters. Then the *Gander* lowered its couple of boats, each with its complement of men, and these boats, vigorously rowed, made their steady way into St. Mildred's Bay, and beached themselves, to the satisfaction of their navigators, upon the hospitable sand, where Colonel Lane and Gascoyne clasped hands with the waiting Luke East. A few hurried words, interchanged in a whisper, assured Colonel Lane that there was a visitor at Quex, the same visitor that had come so often of late to spend the heel of a week at his leisure in that



pleasant country side. Then the crews of the two boats disembarked, with a leisure worthy of the place which they were thus surreptitiously visiting, left their vessels in charge of a chosen guard, and set briskly about their business.

A narrow gorge ran up, at a somewhat steep inclination, from the bay, through the chalky cliff to the level that was the fair tableland of the Birchington area. Up this gorge, on this memorable evening, an English gentleman that had served one king and was now serving another, led with precision his little party of men.

The little party made its way with caution, and as quietly as might be, with Luke East for its pioneer. It was probably the strangest party that had ever landed in the bay since the day when the Saint came to carry Christianity to that part of Kent. All its members were heavily armed. Many carried dark lanterns. Two of the number swung on the crook of their arms long coils of stout rope. When, after scuffling up the gorge, they reached the level plateau of the cliffs, there was still a long tramp before them, over grassy downs, before they came to the cultivated fields that marked the beginning of the village.

The little village was practically asleep as the little band of men, heralded by Luke East, entered its straggling street. Only here and there, at rare intervals, did a glimmer of light, shining through the crevices of some closed shutters, reveal any sign of life in the place. If the place were philosophically calm, not to say lethargic, by day, it was drowsy enough to suit the Seven Sleepers by night, and now appeared, as it were, to exhale the very spirit of slumber. Nevertheless, Lane and his men moved warily, in isolated groups of twos and threes, as

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they effected the passage through the village, and rallied on the spreading tableland beyond. Lane did not feel at his ease until he and his men had left the ancient church behind, and were moving in close order across the open country, in the direction of Quex, which they reached after a quick march of some five minutes at most.

The grounds of Quex were surrounded by a wall that presented no serious obstacle to Colonel Lane's enterprise. In a few moments the little party had scaled the obstacle, and advanced cautiously towards the house. They went by the grass among the trees, to avoid the noise that their feet might have made in following the formal path to the dwelling. When they were close to the hall they came to a halt, in obedience to a gesture from Lane. Where they stood in the shadow of a clump of elms, they could see glimpses of light through shuttered windows on the ground floor, which showed that some of the occupants had not yet retired to rest. This, as East assured the colonel, was what happened nightly, when the gentleman from London was a visitor at Quex. East had made a close study of the place, during his stay at Quex, a stay which it had been perfectly easy to explain to the few of the wholly uninterested inhabitants of Quex with whom he had come in contact. At this hour the servants would all be retired to rest, and only the visitor and his host would be about, smoking, drinking and talking in the dining-room. East had discovered a little window at the rear of the house which it would be very easy to open, and through which admission would readily be gained to the building. To that window Colonel Lane and his party now stealthily made their way.

As Colonel Lane, with the most of his men behind him,

stood at the back of Quex and watched the work of East, who, with the aid of a dark lantern, was busily dealing with the window that was to afford them entrance, he seemed to be suddenly aware, for the first time, of the extraordinary nature of his enterprise. It had gone well so far; would it go as fairly and smoothly to the end? In the quiet of the night, in the stillness and darkness that were only troubled, and that very slightly, by the sounds of East's nimble fingers, and the gleams of East's lantern, he could not help entertaining some doubts, although doubts were foreign to his nature, and he resented entertaining them. However, with a resolute effort he dismissed them. In any case, the thing must now be tried to its conclusion.

In a very little time, that seemed a very long time, East had got the window open. Passing through the aperture, he stood inside, holding up his lantern to light the way. In another moment Colonel Lane was by his side, and then, one by one, the rest followed, as noiselessly as possible. Another stage in the adventure was passed; another move in the game was made; the invaders from overseas were in the stronghold of Quex.

## CHAPTER XXIII

### VISITORS TO QUEX

**I**T was not difficult for Colonel Lane to find his way about such a mansion as Quex. He guided his men through the kitchen and other domestic rooms till he came to a halt in a hall. From this hall a broad staircase ran to the upper part of the building. At the foot of the staircase was a closed door. As the hall was in darkness a line of light was shown beneath the closed door, and from behind it came the sound of voices, though the spoken words were not to be distinguished. Rapidly Lane whispered his instruction to Gascoyne and to East, who in their turn conveyed the orders to their comrades. Then with cautious footsteps and stealthy carriage, Colonel Lane and his resolute crossed the hall and paused again on the threshold of the door of destiny.

All was very still in the house. The servants had evidently long gone to rest. No light was visible anywhere save that single yellow line at the invader's feet. In the general silence, the ticking of a clock on a floor upstairs sounded like the reverberation of many hammer strokes. Lane savoured for a moment, with a kind of school-boyish pleasure, the strangeness of the game, experienced a thrill of that pleasurable tightening of the heart-strings which he associated with the entering of a playhouse in his youth. Here, too, he seemed to stand before a theatre, and one that promised the possibility of a stirring

but player. It seemed curious to him, with his hand poised over the handle of the door, that he, who had tasted a goodish share of brisk adventures since he came to man's estate, and grown familiar with the excitement of tight pinches, should, for this one time, think of the matter he was engaged in as if it were the substance of a stage-play. Perhaps, after all, it was because he had planned the whole thing from the beginning, instead of, as is more often the soldier's lot, working within the limits of the plans of other men. That, he decided, summing up the thoughts that had occupied the fraction of a second, might very well give the true explanation of his mood. By this time his fingers had closed firmly upon the handle, turned it slowly and noiselessly, and made an aperture sufficiently wide to allow him to thrust his head into the room, and observe what was going on within.

Two men were seated by an ample round table of oak, which, for greater comfort, they had drawn near to the pleasant fire that flamed on the open hearth. There were flagons and glasses on the table, which served to show that the evening's entertainment had not been of too austere a character. But, for the moment, these witnesses to conviviality were not holding the attention of the occupants of the room. The two men were mightily busy over a chess-board, and plainly absorbed in their business. As the players sat, the pair were plainly visible to Colonel Lane, and he surveyed them intently and almost, it might be said, at his ease, for the couple were so wrapped up in their mimic battle that they were wholly unconscious of any intrusion or observation.

At the far end of the table, and at the side most distant from the fire, sat a stout, elderly person, of a very

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workaday favour, whom Lane at once took for the master of Quex. Opposite to him sat a middle-aged man, with a large frame that denoted great physical strength, allied to great powers of endurance, and with a large face that it would be flattering to catalogue as other than plain, but that was rendered vigorously distinguished by all the signs of courage, resolution, and strength of character. This man Lane knew on the instant to be the man whom he had travelled from Breda to seek. He had seen him more than once, though always at a distance, but the face was not a face to forget, even if Lane had been the kind of man who forgets the faces he has seen, and Lane was no such man. With a manly appreciation of manliness, Colonel Lane accorded admiration to the soldier whom it was his duty and his pleasure to detest, but who was patently made of soldier-stuff.

Colonel Lane edged himself through the open door very dexterously into the room, and pushed the door noiselessly back, so as to seem almost shut behind him. So cunningly did he control his movements, for all that he was a booted, cloaked and weaponed man, that for an appreciable space of seconds neither of the chess-players were aware of the presence of a spectator of their game, and once again Lane felt that pleasant tingling and tightening sensation, which had reminded him of the playhouse and his salad days. Lane included a fair knowledge of chess among those other acquirements which his admirers termed his accomplishments, and he himself termed his smatterings. He was near enough, where he stood, to observe the board, and to note that as the game went, the champions were fairly matched. It was apparently the turn of the master of Quex to move, and he took a long time about his decision, poisoning his

piece in his hand, and scanning the board with a solemn countenance, while Monk waited upon his judgment with an air of phlegmatic patience admirable to behold. At last the lord of Quex made up his mind, and made his move, and it was Monk's turn to play. Monk took up his piece, pondered and seemed to hesitate, which surprised Colonel Lane, who considered that of the various possible moves only one deserved respectful consideration. Holding his piece in his hand, Monk chanced to look up, and was suddenly aware of the colonel's presence.

Before he could voice the astonishment which even his habitual self-command was unable to restrain, Colonel Lane was standing by the table and overhanging the game, apparently wholly unconscious of the staring faces of the disturbed players.

"Surely," he said with emphasis, "there is only one thing to be done in such a position," and he indicated with technical precision the course of action that commended itself to him.

The owner of Quex was about to speak, but Monk silenced him with a lifted hand. Then he played his piece as Colonel Lane had indicated. "I think you are in the right," he said quietly, "though there were other courses—" He paused, as if he considered that enough had been said upon the subject, and that the time had now arrived for explanation of a stranger's presence. Monk's face showed no trace of alarm or perturbation. In this he differed from his host, whose face had flushed purple with amazement, and who gaped like a fish. Monk looked steadily at Lane. "Who are you?" he asked, "and what do you want?"

Lane ignored the first part of the question and an-

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swered the second part, while he met Monk's steady gaze with a look as steady.

"I seek speech with you, General," he said, coolly. "I have news for you, news of the gravest importance."

Monk looked at the speaker with a composure which was curiously in contrast with the agitation depicted so lively on the face of his host. It was plain that the lord of Quex was only restrained from ejaculations by the rigid tranquillity of his distinguished guest. But indeed, the mere entry, even at that late hour, of a person with an unfamiliar face into the room was not in itself an event that should necessarily be alarming, either to the lord of Quex or to the Puritan General, his guest. The new-comer might very well be some messenger from London, the bearer of important news, the noise of whose admission to the house had been unnoticed by the zealous chess-players.

However Monk may have reasoned as to the matter, he acted with an admirable calmness. "What is your news?" he asked.

Lane advanced a few paces further into the room, bringing himself a few feet nearer to the General. He carried himself with an air of great earnestness and simplicity.

"My news," he said, "is so grave and urgent that it was deemed best it should be communicated at once to your excellency, and I have travelled far in order to do so."

While Lane spoke, Monk moved a little in his chair, so as to face more directly the speaker. He rested his hands upon its arms out of the natural, instinctive precaution to be ready to rise to his feet as quickly as might



be, if need were. The new-comer was very near to him, but the new-comer had said nothing and done nothing to cause alarm. As for Squire Smith, he kept his peace, staring and breathing hard.

Lane was now within a few feet of the General. "My news is," he said, "that General Monk is my prisoner." As he spoke he straightened his right arm away from the covering folds of his cloak, and presented the pistol which he had carried concealed there at Monk's head.

Monk made as if to rise, but instantly thought better of it, and kept his seat. He was too well-read in the carriage of men not to recognize the meaning of the steady arm and the menace of the levelled weapon. The squire lumbered to his feet with a choking cry that was stifled in its birth. For with the utterance of the word "prisoner," which Lane had given as signal, the room was thronged with armed men. Two of these, Gascoyne and East, flung themselves upon the astounded master of Quex, and speedily silenced his speech and ended his struggles. In a few moments he sat again in his chair, neatly gagged and bound, a helpless and bewildered prisoner by his own fire-side. The remainder of the men ranged themselves by the door and waited upon events.

During the course of the brief struggle, Monk had sat still and silent, for he had heard clearly Lane's words to him, and he knew that Lane said no more than he meant.

"I mean you no harm," Lane had said. "I have no wish to hurt you, while you keep quiet. But you will come to hurt if you do not keep quiet."

Monk hearing what he heard, and seeing what he saw, had taken the stranger's counsel and kept quiet. But

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when the Squire of Quex had been dealt with, Monk, with his gaze still fixed on the face of his mysterious enemy, chose to speak.

"What is your purpose?" he asked composedly, and then added, as if an afterthought, "assassination?"

Lane shook his head. "I am no assassin," he answered, "but a faithful subject and soldier of his gracious Majesty King Charles the Second, whom Heaven bless and preserve."

Monk spoke again, carrying himself as calmly as if he were conversing across his own table in London, and not in a lonely house in Kent, in a room filled with enemies, and with a pistol at his head.

"You may very well be what you profess," he said, "and yet command no great confidence in either your honesty or your honour."

Lane smiled pleasantly. "You do not know me, General," he said, "or you would not talk so wild. I am Colonel Lane, John Lane of Bentley. If my name has the fortune to be known to you, I think you will admit that my honour and my honesty are alike unquestioned."

Monk knitted his shaggy eyebrows. "I have heard of you, Colonel Lane," he said. "What do you want here?"

Lane explained amiably. "It has occurred to certain of his Majesty's most humble servants that it would be a good thing for England if a meeting could be brought about between his Majesty and you. It would not be politic for his Majesty to visit his dominions at this time, and it is within the limits of possibility that if you were summoned to his Majesty's presence you might disregard the summons."

Monk said nothing, but the sour smile that for a mo-

ment altered the settled composure of his heavy countenance answered for him. Lane countered the smile with a laugh, and continued.

"Anticipating this possibility, the same humble servants of his Majesty have decided to take the law into their own hands, and to escort you oversea, that they may bring you face to face with his Majesty. If you will give me your word that you will accompany me without making any attempt to escape or to give the alarm you shall come as you now are, neither bound nor gagged, and I promise you such careful treatment as one honourable man can give to another. If you will not pass me your word, I must needs serve you as my friends have served your host, and carry you with me, a helpless bundle. I may add that I have a sufficient body of men to resist any attack that might be made in the village, if the village were made aware of your capture, but I can assure your excellency that if you had a troop of Guards at your call, they would not effect your rescue alive."

While Lane was speaking Monk, though he listened to him with close attention, had been scanning with a scrutinizing gaze each face, in turn, of the little force of men that had been so suddenly arrayed against him. It had long been his business to learn something of men's depths from their surfaces. Even when Lane had come to an end of his little harangue, Monk still held his peace and still studied carefully all the eager, staring faces in front of him. Just as Lane was beginning to grow impatient of the unnecessary pause, Monk seemed to find some result of his contemplation which afforded him satisfaction, and he unlocked his lips.

"Whoever you are," he said, looking sternly at Lane, "you are engaged upon a very foolish and a very fool-

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hardy business, and if those that are with you are wise, they will have no further share in the business."

"Come, General," Lane said calmly, "we waste time. Will you take my terms, or must I carry you off by force?"

Instead of answering Lane, Monk addressed himself to the men that were ranged at the door.

"Men," he said, "you have been led into a mad enterprise which may end on the gallows. If any of you have the wit to save your skins, I promise a thousand pounds apiece to each man that will stand by me to-night."

"General," said Lane sternly, "you should be enough of a soldier to remember that, in warfare, it is irregular to appeal to a command against its commander."

Monk laughed contemptuously. "You talk nonsense when you talk of war. I appeal to a band of robbers against their robber chief." Once more he turned to Lane's little following and addressed them.

"A thousand pounds to each man of you that will leave this fellow and stand by me."

Colonel Lane instinctively felt the tension of his men relaxing. In his heart, he knew that, from Monk's point of view, there was some truth in Monk's speech. His little unauthorized levy was, in a sense, no better than a band of robbers, to be bought by the best paymaster. For an instant, in which he felt suddenly dismal and sick, he found himself wondering how far his men would stand this sudden, this unexpected test. He did not turn his face from the direction of Monk's face, but he had no need to look behind him to observe the carriage of his troop. There was a great round mirror on the wall at the back of Monk, and in that mirror he could see his little company where they stood together.

He had only just time to observe the sharp quiver of emotion that stirred them all at the sudden appeal of Monk, before something of his doubt was swiftly answered. Gaspard Penhoec sprang forward from his fellows, and took his place by the side of Monk.

"I am with you, old Bawcock," he cried, and then called to his comrades, "Do as I do, Devilskins, and make your fortunes."

The men were plainly taken aback by the strangeness of the situation and the apparent necessity for choice. No one moved. In that instant of indecision, Lane addressed Penhoec sternly.

"To your place," he commanded; but Penhoec only grinned in his face.

"Don't play the fool, good Quixote," he sneered. "We are out to make money, and old Ironsides offers better terms than you."

It all happened very quickly. Gascoyne afterwards made many unsuccessful efforts to compute the precise fraction of time that elapsed between the moment of Monk's appeal and the moment of its sequel. Penhoec called out to those in Lane's company that he had introduced to join him. These men were actually on the move to obey. Gascoyne and his friends, as he learned from each of them afterwards, were all for Lane, but were taken aback by the abruptness of the incident and uncertain how to act. Monk was smiling in triumph at the change in affairs, which rallied to his side so large a proportion of his enemy's force, and did so much to equalize the odds against him. Penhoec was still grinning insolently at his trick. Then, with extraordinary swiftness, Lane extended his right arm. Gascoyne had only time to see that the hand held a levelled pistol before the

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flash came and the report of the discharge. Through the sequent smoke, Penhoec lurched forward, with an ugly noise in his throat, and sprawled across the table, scattering dishes and glasses, while a red stream, that was not spilt wine, slipped over the oak. In the next instant Lane had dropped his reeking weapon, and, plucking another pistol from his belt, aimed it steadily at Monk.

"General," he said, speaking as calmly and as sternly as before, "by rights that bullet was yours, for tempting men from their allegiance to their chief. For your own sake I wish you alive, but if you share my wish you will be wise and hold your tongue."

The moment of uncertainty had passed. Lane's prompt deed had saved the day. Monk sat motionless, eyeing, with a soldier's appreciation, the motionless muzzle of Lane's pistol. Gascoyne and his party, waiting on command, stood steadily together, and the friends of the dead man, dismayed and overawed into irresolution, did nothing.

Lane gave his orders as coolly as if nothing untoward had happened to trouble his plans.

"Gascoyne," he commanded, "disarm those fellows." He did not turn his head towards his men; he could see quite clearly in the mirror what they were about, but his voice showed no doubt of their loyalty. The words were scarcely spoken before they were obeyed; the three partizans of Penhoec making no resistance. There could be no question but that Lane had gained the victory, and that there was no further fear of mutiny. Lane again addressed General Monk, who sat as composedly in his place at the encumbered, blood-stained table as if he were still continuing cheerfully the interrupted pastime.

"General," he said calmly, "you acted very ill, and the blood of that rebel is on your head. I should be fitter for nothing better than to herd sheep if, in such business as this, I had done other than I did."

Monk looked at the speaker with the same unflinching gaze. He might have been carved out of wood, so motionless, so indifferent did he seem.

"General Monk," Lane continued, quietly, "I still repeat my offer. If you will give me the word I ask, I will take you with me on the terms I first proposed. Let me add," he said quickly, before Monk could answer, "that in case you do give me your word and are tempted by any chance occasion to break it, I will instantly kill you."

Monk answered him in a voice of grave reproof that was as collected and deliberate as if it still were for him, and not for Lane, to give command.

"You have no right, sir," he said, "to assume for a moment that I should ever be tempted to break my word, once passed. I excuse your blunder on the ground of your not unnatural confusion."

This utterance, as Gascoyne reflected later, was not unamusing, for if the Puritan General was rigidly self-possessed, the Cavalier gentleman was as much at his ease as if he had been dealing with no weightier matter than the playing of a game of cards. At the moment, Gascoyne had no leisure for reflection, but took deeds and words as they came.

Monk glanced around the room, looked at his pinioned host, at the body lolling across the table, at the little cluster of armed resolute, at the three disarmed men that were so ready to be traitors, and then travelled slowly back to the emotionless face of Colonel Lane.

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"I appear," he said, with the simple dignity of a strong man who, being also a sensible man, yields decently to necessity, "to be in your power, and I may as well spare myself and you the indignity of gagging and binding me. I will come with you in silence, and I solemnly promise you that I will make no effort to escape."

Colonel Lane nodded cheerfully, and there was an approving look on his face.

"Come," he said, "that is very handsomely spoken, and we will let bygones be bygones."

He paused and listened for an instant intently. He could now hear distinctly the sound of approaching footsteps.

"I fear," he said quietly, "that our little difference of opinion has disturbed the household." He turned to Gascoyne. "Bolt the door," he ordered. Gascoyne instantly obeyed and Lane again addressed Monk.

"I fear, General," he said, "that I must so far further trouble you as to ask you to still the alarms of those that are hastening hither."

Even as he spoke there came a scuffle of footsteps halting outside the door; someone tried the handle, and then there came a loud and nervous knocking upon the panels. Colonel Lane quietly thrust his pistol back into his belt and regarded Monk with an air of tranquil unconcern. Monk smiled in grim admiration, and, turning towards the door, asked in a loud voice who was there and what was wanted.

A somewhat tremulous voice from the lobby was understood to ask if anything was the matter. It was evident that the speaker had recognized the General's voice.

"Why, what should be the matter?" Monk answered



sharply, with a well-feigned impatience that Colonel Lane inwardly applauded.

Again the quavering voice outside explained that the speaker thought he had heard a pistol shot. Monk again replied with the same brisk impatience as before.

"Why, of course you heard a pistol shot," he replied. "I fired my pistol but now at a squalling cat in the garden. Be so good as to go to bed and trouble my privacy no more."

It was soon evident that Monk's words had the desired effect. The man outside stammered some apology, and immediately after his footsteps were heard shuffling away, making, as they went, the same sound of noisy trepidation wherewith they had approached.

Thereafter the chariot of adventure rolled smoothly on its wheels. Lane explained to the trussed and purple-faced Squire of Quex, that, in view of the certainty of his guest's abduction, and the disorders and disturbances that might arise if the news should reach London, his wisest course, both in his own interests and in the interest of General Monk, would be to keep a still tongue in his head until such time as General Monk might be able to communicate with him from abroad. It would now soon be morning, and therefore the servants would be stirring, and ensure him a speedy release from his somewhat uncomfortable position. Lane suggested that, when he was released, he should control his people, by what story he pleased to concoct to account for his guest's disappearance, and he was good enough to adumbrate a plausible tale. This matter should be the less difficult, as none of the servants had any knowledge of that guest's identity. To them, as Lane had learned from Luke East, he was no more than a plain Mr. Cowley

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from London. The Squire of Quex, being a justice of the peace, would be able, no doubt, to take the law into his own hands to a considerable extent, and to conduct any necessary inquiry in such a way as to keep Monk's name out of the business.

The Squire of Quex, having signified his understanding by several violent noddings of the head, was then left to himself and his unpleasant reflections. There was no more to be said, and it was time to be moving. Lane rallied his forces, and in a few minutes more the little party was proceeding at a brisk rate along the road to the sea, with their illustrious captive in their midst.

The journey was made in absolute safety. There was no sound or sign of life in the little village, where the few gleams of light that the invaders had noted on their arrival had long since faded out of existence. Monk, in the middle of his captors, adhered religiously to his word, and made no attempt either to escape or to raise the alarm. Lane had never the faintest doubt of this, and his pistol rested unheeded in his belt. But if by some astonishing chance Monk had proved to be other than Lane knew him to be, Lane's fingers would have found the pistol-butt quickly enough, and there would have been a Puritan General the less in the tents of Gideon. Your true campaigner is prepared for every emergency.

Within a quarter of an hour of the time when Lane and his companions quitted Quex, they had again entered their boat. They were rowed swiftly over the quiet water to the place where their ship awaited them. In a few moments more they had weighed anchor, and were making with a favourable wind for the Low Countries.

It sometimes diverted Colonel Lane, what time the *Gander* ploughed the black water, to consider what tale

that amazing justice of the peace, Mr. Smith, of Quex, would tell in the dawning, when some astounded servitor should come and discover his manacled master and his tragic guest. He had hinted to the pinioned worthy the lines that it were wisest the narrative should follow. There should be the sudden appearance of a troop of bandits clamorous for the capture of the wealthy Mr. Cowley. There should be the rash shot of Mr. Cowley which had brought down its victim and had roused the household. There had been Mr. Cowley's comforting assurance about the slaughtered cat, an assurance forced from him by levelled pistols. Finally, there had been the disappearance of the raiders with their prisoner in their midst, leaving poor Mr. Smith a pitiable prisoner in his own house, with only a pistoled robber to keep him company in his vigil towards the dawn. Such a story need not seem incredible in wild times. Its relation — for it must needs get about — might very well trouble the country-side, but it would take a long while to filter up to London, where, indeed, Mr. Cowley might prove hard to trace. Colonel Lane was anxious that General Monk's secret might be preserved, and General Monk's disappearance hidden, not because he cared a damn about General Monk, but because he desired that discovery should not embarrass his master and King, by delivering England to confusion.

## CHAPTER XXIV

### IT WAS A LOVER AND HIS LASS

**D**URING the absence of Colonel Lane upon his incredible adventure, there were at least two persons in the world who believed themselves to be perfectly happy. The fortunate pair was made of a man and a woman, and the name of the man was Charles, and the name of the woman was Jane. Charles, who knew nothing of the schemes of Colonel Lane, was delightfully reconciled to the surrender of a kingdom, which was very notably not his to surrender. He rejoiced enormously inwardly, and he was hard put to it not to rejoice enormously outwardly, to the astonishment of his vassalage, at the magnificent completeness of the change in his life. Yesterday, he was, at the best, a king without a kingdom, at the worst a king-claimant, doomed, because he had a sense of humour, to contrast the pomp of his pretension with the squalor of his fact. It was true that he had called himself King of England, and that, according to his lights and beliefs, he was, by divine right, King of England. But it seemed as if Providence, in its wisdom, was content to endow him with no more than the divinity of his righteousness, and to leave him to outward regard very much like your ordinary, commonplace hand-to-mouth beggar.

Charles saw himself and his case with a clear irony that did not attempt to distort that which was already

so grotesque as to be proof against distortion. He appreciated his neediness, the grim necessity which condemned him to be obsequious to princes who resented the grudging patronage they consented to afford, the steady dwindling of such poor chances as he ever had of attaining his ends. Now, by deliberately abandoning all his ambition, by cutting himself adrift from the battered old hulk on which he had made so long and so disastrous a voyage, he ceased, in a jiffy, as if with the nimbleness of a mountebank's trick, to be Charles, by the Grace of God, and all the rest of it, King of an England that would have none of him, of a Scotland that he would have none of ever again, of an Ireland that he had never seen, of a France upon which he was, with ostentatious reluctance, permitted to batten as a parasite. Instead of this, he, shedding the tawdry and burlesque trappings of a false royalty, stood up and stretched his arms, a free man, and drew the free air into his lungs. Being free to live his own life, he was free to love his own love, and he delivered himself over heart and soul to his white-hot passion for Jane Lane, with the simplicity of a school-boy and the idolatry of a poet.

As for Jane Lane, she was scarcely less a captive to the fantastic madness of love than the man who was at once her sovereign lord and her professed lover. Jane was no little of a philosopher; she weighed the world wisely, perceived it judiciously; but she was not philosopher enough to be untroubled and unaltered by the sudden sweetness of her wooing. She had loved one man through all the years from girlhood to womanhood with that steady love which burns like an altar light in a holy place, but which may be so blown upon and fanned as to flare into a conflagration and devastate the temple.

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The love-making of Charles had done as much; it had quickened Jane's silent worship into passion, and had transmuted a woman, who prided herself upon a reasonableness that was well-nigh stoical, into a maid as enchantingly headstrong as Juliet in the play. The wise creature that Jane had been was not dethroned indeed; but she was superseded by an admittedly foolish woman that was loved to the top of his heart by the man whom her own heart worshipped.

Jane knew very well that she was playing a part. She knew very well that if her brother's experiment proved to be successful, it would end in Charles being King and in desolation for Jane Lane. But, in the meantime, John Lane was abroad, adventuring eccentrically on sea or land with no more than the dicer's hazard between triumph and annihilation, and she was shut in a wonder-world, alone with her lover. She was Ariadne with Theseus, may be, but at least for the moment the Island of Naxos was a celestial dwelling-place, redolent of exquisite essences, musical with the music of the stars, haunted only with glorious ghosts of renowned servants and worshippers of love.

All of the foregoing is no more than an elaboration of the simple fact that Charles Stuart was in love with Jane Lane, and that Jane Lane was in love with Charles Stuart. But it is noteworthy that their sweethearting was wholly comely and unsullied. If Charles was dowered by Nature with a wanton disposition, he made no show of it in those fair delicious hours. He wished to make Jane his wife, and he wooed her in the reticent spirit of that wish. Jane, for her part, while she yielded herself to the dear intoxication of the dream that the love-making might end in giving her Charles Stuart for

her husband, her man, never, for one hot-blooded moment, entertained the thought, if the dream failed to become reality, of giving herself to Charles as his mistress. She did not believe that his love for her would ever consent to ask so much. She knew that her love for him was of that quality which could never consent to give so much. The fire of her passion was fierce, but it burned with a pure flame.

During those enchanted hours, which might have been years or instants, centuries or seconds, the happy man and the happy woman were constantly in company. Pretty Willemyn was permitted to be the drowsiest of guardians. Her amiable absences were unnoticed. She was gratefully free to sit apart as much as she pleased, and to give herself up to summer-coloured musings about a certain tall gentleman that was then upon his travels. As for Charles's courtiers, they saw but little of their liege, and they had the intelligence to keep their wits still in his presence, if they suffered them to gambol behind his back. Flushed with some money that Colonel Lane's munificence had provided, they tasted in moderation of such pleasures as Breda could afford, and while they revelled in the good cheer of the "Long Leopard," they made merry over their master's romance. But there was no one of them all, from Ettington to Pippet, who did not recognize frankly that it was a romance, and who did not admit, half in derision and half in admiration, that it was as dainty and unstained as the courtship of a boy and girl. As for Challis, he stood apart with unmoved countenance, watching with a keenness that was never evident, and waiting for letters from England with an anxiety that was never displayed.

Let no rude hand attempt to paint those radiant,

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gracious hours. To the man they seemed to have more meaning than all the rest of his haggard, battered career. If to the woman they had more of the delicate fabric of a fairy tale, at least she was resolute to take the fairy tale for gospel truth so long as there were any enchanted pages yet to read, or any fire of love upon the hearth of life to read them by. So she had read fairy tales in her childhood, sprawling by the embers, her long hair tumbling over her ears, as she walked the flowering highways of Arcadia, or waited, all of a tremble, pinioned to the stake, while the golden-coated soldier hurled himself with levelled spear against the loathly worm.

Charles, more practical, perhaps, was planning a new life in a rapture of creation. Now he would imagine himself permitted by the authorities of the Commonwealth, glad to be quit of him and his pretensions, to take up his abode in the new world beyond the seas, and there, a settler with his wife, to build himself a home. Now, if by harsh fate, this liberty were denied him, he pictured himself in the service of some foreign state, winning those warlike honours to which his approved courage might justifiably aspire. After all, it did not matter where the new life was lived, or how, so long as it was shared by Jane Stuart.



## CHAPTER XXV

### A VISITOR TO BREDA

ON a certain fine spring morning in the sixth decade of the seventeenth century, a pair of gentlemen walked, with all outward seeming of amiability, along a certain street of Breda, and came to a halt in front of a certain door. They were, to all appearance, unattended, their conduct unfettered, their actions unnoted, their conversation unheard. It is true that there were other persons in the street at the time, casual passers-by, no doubt, to the number of some ten presentations of humanity. These, without the least regard for, or apparent cognizance of each other's existence, lounged or lolled or drifted about the causeway, all apparently idle, all apparently in a highly speculative mood. Everything seemed to interest these loungers: the placid blue sky, the flight of passing birds; the whistling of a bargeman, the ticking of a clock; anything or everything except the quiet passage of the two gentlemen towards the haven of a certain door. It would seem that the idlers had no eyes for any two humanities so entirely unimportant. Yet the two gentlemen, as they walked and talked, were conscious, the one pleasantly, and the one unpleasantly, of the ceaseless scrutiny of ten observant pairs of eyes, and, whimsically enough, by association of ideas, of the readiness of as many pairs of pistols.

Colonel Lane and General Monk — for the moment

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the notions of military precedence were necessarily inverted — climbed in silence the high flights of stairs that conducted, with great demands upon the climbers' patience, to the apartments that represented the royal palace of the reigning King of England. By a common consent, no less complete because it was cast into no form of words, the conversation which the two men had kept up so assiduously, so briskly, when they walked in the glare of day, had been suffered to die into silence.

Silently the brace of men mounted from floor to floor. The thoughts of Monk must be left untranslated. As for Colonel Lane, he was seldom disposed to meditation while a thing was in the doing. Profound reflections might be necessary when some adventure was intercepted, or later, when the adventure being over and done with, leisure was available for consideration as to how the adventure had been carried out. But while the adventure was blossoming, while the adventure was flowering, while the adventure was fruiting, there was no fitting time for other consideration than the carrying of the adventure to its most prosperous termination. Therefore it came about that, while Colonel Lane was readily as taciturn as Monk, his mind was presumably less troubled with the irritation of any problems demanding solution.

When at last the mounting couple had reached to the giddy heights where his Majesty reigned, Colonel Lane conducted his companion down the dark and dismal corridor that conducted to the King's apartments. Colonel Lane tapped on the panels of a door in front of him, and, receiving no responsive answer, without further ceremony turned the handle. With an inviting

gesture, he summoned Monk to enter the dingy little ante-chamber, which his action had revealed. Monk entered the room in silence, and the colonel following, closed the door behind him. Then, for the first time since they had quitted the publicity of the street, Monk spoke.

"Is this," he said, looking about him with a grim smile of appreciation, "the residence of the young man Charles Stuart?"

"This," replied Colonel Lane, with the fine gravity of one that discovered nothing incongruous between lodgings and lodger, "is the residence of his Majesty King Charles the Second."

Monk spoke again with admirable equability. "As far," he said, "as it is the privilege of a prisoner to express a wish, I should be glad to have speech with the young man as speedily as may be."

Colonel Lane nodded. "His Majesty is possibly abroad," he observed, "but there should be somebody at hand to tell us where he is."

Lane passed into the next room, followed by his captive, and there, in the gaunt, unlovely space, found Ettington and Pipplet, Kingfisher and Garlinge busy at a game of cribbage. The players looked up as the new-comers entered, and Ettington gave the first of the pair a shout of welcome.

"Why, it's Lane come back again," he cried cheerily. "Welcome home, man." He was obviously pleased to see Lane, and so were the others, for they grinned and nodded their heads, and suffered their cards to grow cold in his honour. As for General Monk, he stood behind Lane, and the players scarcely discerned him, and paid him no manner of heed.

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"Where is the King?" Lane asked. "I have urgent need of speech with him."

"His Majesty," replied Ettington, "is, I believe, at this moment in the society of two very charming ladies, one of whom is your adorable sister, and the other her sweet minister and vassal, pretty Mistress Willemyn Yeoman."

"Will one of you do me the favour," Lane asked, "to go to his Majesty, and tell him that I have returned, and very earnestly desire an immediate audience? Add that I have a gentleman to present to him, whom I believe he will be pleased to meet."

Ettington quitted the table and the game. "I will inform his Majesty," he said, and made towards the door. On his way he came face to face with Monk, who stood where he had come to a halt, wearing an air of grave and disdainful composure. For an instant Ettington looked in surprise at the stranger, then suddenly the Cavalier recognized the Puritan. "My God, it is old Monk!" he cried in astonishment.

His words stirred the others with the force of an exploding shell. Instantly they scrambled to their feet, and hastened to join Ettington. "Nonsense, man," cried Garlinge, who suspected some buffoonery on Ettington's part. But Pippet, who was at first as incredulous as Garlinge, going close up to the stolid Puritan, stared in his face and then turned to his companions to confirm Ettington's assertion.

"It is the old villain, sure enough," he declared. "I know his damnable phiz too well to be mistaken."

On this confirmation of what had seemed an incredible proposition, all four men burst into a roar of delighted laughter, which failed to make any impression upon the

imperturbability of Monk. It made an immediate impression upon the carriage of Colonel Lane.

"Gentlemen," he said sharply, "have the goodness to remember that General Monk is my prisoner, and that I have promised him courteous treatment. Treat him with respect therefore, for an offence addressed to the General, who cannot resent it, is an offence addressed to me, who can resent it, and will."

The Cavaliers were hot-headed and high-spirited enough to welcome at all times any pretext for quarrel, but their sincere respect and regard for Colonel Lane restrained them now, and they took his reproof with good-humour. Ettington gripped him by the arm.

"Oh, Lord, Lane, what does it all mean?" he cried in an agony of impatience. "How did you catch your fox?"

"That," Lane answered drily, "is for the King's ear first of all. Will you be so good, my lord Ettington, as to entreat his Majesty to grant me instant audience?" Then, as Ettington was about to leave the room, Lane restrained him. "Do not," he added, "divulge to his Majesty the nature of the surprise I have in store for him."

"Heavens, no, man," Ettington assured the colonel. "You have done a wonder, and it is no more than fair that you should be your own showman."

"I shall be glad," said Lane, "if you will be so gracious as to tell my sister that I have accomplished the object of my voyage."

Ettington nodded and quitted the room. Lane offered Monk a chair by the window, which the General accepted with a grave inclination of the head. Then Lane moved apart to the further end of the room, with the Cavaliers

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clustering eagerly about him. They were all crazy with impatience to know how the amazing adventure had come to pass, but Lane was obdurate. There was the flagrant fact that General Monk was in Breda, and a prisoner to the King's Majesty, but no more than this should be made known until the King himself was present.

Fortunately for the gentlemen, their curiosity was not strained to bursting point, for even as they were alternately plying Lane with profitless questions, and eyeing the grim General where he sat apart, the sound of quick-speeding footsteps was heard in the corridor, and in another moment Charles had entered the room. He rushed to Lane with extended hands, smiling greeting.

"You are welcome back to Breda, honest friend," he cried, with a full-hearted enthusiasm in his tone that somewhat surprised the colonel, who hoped and believed that Charles knew nothing of what Lane had done. Charles's next words reassured him on this point.

"What is this news of yours," he asked, "about which our dear Ettington is so mysterious?"

The dear Ettington, who came in close attendance upon his Majesty's nimble heels, grinned from the doorway to Lane assurance of his faith. Lane had no better reward for him than to get him and his companions out of the room as speedily as might be.

"Your Majesty," he said, "I have the honour to desire a few moments of private speech."

A kind of chorussed groan escaped from the breasts of the disappointed Cavaliers. Charles stared at Lane in some surprise.

"Why, surely, John Lane," he answered. "As private as you please." He turned to his followers as he

spoke. "Gentlemen," he said, "I must ask you to retire. I would speak alone with Colonel Lane."

Very reluctantly, and with very lugubrious countenances, the four Cavaliers quitted the room, shaking their heads ruefully at Lane, as if to upbraid him for thus cheating them of their desire. All this while General Monk sat in the window-seat as motionless and composed as if he had been moulded in monumental bronze. Charles spoke again.

"Well, Lane," he said, "well, man, what is it? Where is this friend that you wish to present to me?"

The grim and rigid figure by the window seemed suddenly to quicken into life. General Monk rose to his feet.

"No friend, Charles Stuart," he said, in a clear, steady voice. As Charles turned at the sudden sound of the unexpected speech, Lane stepped between the exiled King and the captive General.

"Your Majesty," he said, "I have the honour to present to you his Excellency General Monk."

Charles gaped in wonder as he stared at the stern-visaged stranger, who now confronted him with so lowering a forehead. "General Monk," he murmured. "General Monk. It is indeed General Monk." Charles was so taken aback by the astonishing presentation that for the moment his ready wit failed him, and he stood obviously at a loss. All manner of bewildering suppositions jostled in his mind. Still staring at the Republican General, he addressed his question to Lane.

"Colonel Lane," he asked, "what is the meaning of this?"

"It means, Sire," Lane answered, "that I and some

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friends of mine have been at the pains of visiting England in order to persuade his Excellency to pay your Majesty a visit."

"It means," said Monk sternly, "that certain emissaries of yours have raided a private gentleman's dwelling, and made me a prisoner by force of numbers. That is all I have to say to you, and I will say no more."

Charles turned to Lane. "Have you indeed done this?" he asked.

Lane bowed. "It is as the General says," he replied, "and I trust that my action may meet with your Majesty's approval."

The face of the King presented all the signs of that agitation which, when it is betrayed by an ordinary individual, is said commonly to betoken that the individual does not know whether to laugh or to cry.

"By the Lord, Lane," he exclaimed. "I did not think that you were so much of a fillibuster. I do not know what I should say to you. I do not know what I should say to his Excellency. But, whatever I say to his Excellency, I must say to him alone. Be so good as to attend in the ante-chamber."

Colonel Lane bowed again, and quitted the room, leaving the King and the General standing face to face.



## CHAPTER XXVI

### MAN AND MAN

A NATURAL silence mastered, for the instant, the two men who represented the headship of the opposing forces in England. Charles Stuart was, as it were, symbolical of Right Divine, of episcopacy, of the great monarchical and ecclesiastical system which had been, of late, so rudely shaken. It may be that an ironic observer—and ironic observers are frequently misinformed—would have considered Charles Stuart to be a sufficiently whimsical symbol of Church and State. Let it be remembered, however, that, in despite of any outward levity of conduct and of carriage, the young man had the advantage of the guidance of Hyde, and that he had pondered long over the monumental volume of Hobbes. Opposed to him, in that dismal, barn-like room in Breda, was George Monk, an opportunist, if ever a man could so be tabled. Monk was one of those creatures, strong and purposeful, who owe their fortunes to the chaos of a civil war, and to their capacity for grasping the lock of opportunity, and building their own fortunes on the losses of others. Here was a fine pair of gladiators for the lonely arena.

Each man looked at the other with an intense and reasonable curiosity. In them, the poles of political controversy were thus rudely clashed together. To each one of them the other represented all that he most detested, or all that he most professed to detest. The question in

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the minds of each was certainly, which of us is the better man? Was it also, which of us is the better man for England?

Charles was the first to speak; so much licence afforded to him by Monk, governed, it may be, by some vague memories of respect for royalty.

"General Monk," Charles said, earnest and genial, "I am in all honesty at your feet. I can only entreat you to forgive the zeal that has brought about this most bewildering encounter."

Monk knitted his shaggy eyebrows, puzzled by the courtesy of Charles. He knew that he was at a disadvantage but he did not wish to appear at a disadvantage.

"Mr. Charles Stuart—" he began, but Charles instantly interrupted him with a raised finger of protest.

"Forgive me," he said calmly, "but as I called you General Monk, it would be no less than courteous, if we are to have any further conversation, if you were to address me as I am accustomed to be addressed. But I am not unreasonably punctilious, and, if you prefer it, let us be plain Mr. Monk and Mr. Stuart."

Monk made a grimace and shrugged his shoulders. He felt that he had put himself in the wrong, and he was vexed by the knowledge. It was true that he had had a good deal to irritate him within very recent hours, but he was keen-witted enough to realize that he would gain nothing in his present dilemma by being ill-mannered.

"Your Royal Highness," he said slowly, adopting the best substitute he could afford for the title of "Majesty" which he could not bring himself to use; "I never ex-

pected to have the honour of meeting you, and the novelty of my introduction to your presence, together with my own very natural ignorance of courtly etiquette, must plead my forgiveness for any slips that I may make in unfamiliar ceremonial." He paused for a moment, and then added, "May I ask, what does your Royal Highness want with me?"

Charles smiled at the somewhat sluggish complaisance of his great enemy.

"General," he responded, with the blithe smile that had so often won him affection, "in one sense I want of you everything; in another sense, nothing. In the core of my heart I want what I fear you are not likely to give me, and that is your assistance to regain my kingdom."

Monk made as if to speak, but Charles, with a gesture at once gracious and commanding, restrained him.

"But," he continued, "I want still more urgently to assure you that I had no part in, or knowledge of, this plot against your person and your liberty, which, while it has had the advantage of affording me the pleasure of meeting you, has, it may be, occasioned you some discomfort. May I entreat you to assure me that you accept my word in this matter?"

Monk slightly inclined his head, the while he constrained his rugged features to wear the likeness of a smile.

"If," he said slowly, "your Royal Highness says that you were not privy to this business, why, I have no more to say save that I believe your Royal Highness."

"I thank you," Charles said gravely. "In the next place, I beg you to accept my sincere regret that so

## A HEALTH UNTO HIS MAJESTY

Quixotic an enterprise should have been attempted in my interests, though not with my knowledge. All that is left to me is to present my apologies for the over-heady zeal of my friends, and to promise you all the assistance in my power towards your speedy return to England."

Charles's face was candid; Charles's manner was candour itself. Never did he bear himself with a more princely air, or take a greater pleasure in his own behaviour. He knew that he was acting magnanimously, but he also knew, though he might not have been willing to admit the knowledge, that in acting magnanimously he was also acting wisely in his own interests. At the first blush it might seem a profitable game to hold his arch-enemy, General Monk, in his hands as a prisoner, but the most slender of second thoughts could not fail, and did not fail, to assure him that there was no practical advantage to gain from the odd position. It was indeed open to him, supposing — what he could not suppose — that he had no conscience or morality, to try to come to terms with Monk on the threat of taking Monk's life if Monk refused compliance. But such a scheme, even if Charles had been willing to agree to it, was not in reality worthy of serious consideration. Charles had the Powers of Europe to reckon with, and the great chancelleries could scarcely be tempted to connive at, or condone, such a manner of settling a complicated political question. It was plain that John Lane was a devilish fine fellow, who had done a devilish fine thing, but it was also plain that John Lane's work must be undone, and John Lane's plan abandoned, if Charles Stuart were to come out of the enterprise with credit, merit, or profit. Wherefore, while he gallantly set his

captive free, Charles's face was candid, and Charles's manner candour itself.

Monk eyed warily the man whom he consented to address as "Royal Highness," but could not, as yet, bring himself to salute as "Majesty." It is likely that he appreciated the position as clearly as Charles did; that he, too, realized how impossible it would be for an exiled prince, dependent upon the grudging toleration of great Powers, to hold the chief man in England to ransom after the fashion of a bandit chief. He savoured the humour of the situation as much as Charles did, if he had not Charles's lively sense of its dramatic value.

"Do I understand," he asked, heavily, "that you are offering me my freedom?"

"I hope I am not difficult to understand," Charles answered quietly, "when I am speaking as a King should speak."

Monk looked about him leisurely, looked at the comely, melancholy picture on the wall, looked at the young man in front of him. "I am free to go?"

"Free as air," Charles answered brightly. It amused him to wonder how much they two understood of each other in the whimsical game they were playing.

Monk glanced at his antagonist with an air of affected disdain. "Surely your Royal Highness is losing a point in the game?" he said, in a voice of sour deprecation.

Charles shook his head. He was still smiling, and he carried his hands with their palms discovered, as if he were warming them before the blaze of some genial fire. Indeed, in a sense he was doing so, but the fire was kindled on the hearth of his own thoughts.

"It is no game of mine, your Excellency," he protested, "and I hold no hand in it."

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Monk eyed his involuntary host shrewdly, while he allowed his reflections to pursue their measured pace. He was quite inclined to believe that Charles was not privy to Lane's kidnapping impudence, but he was also conscious that Charles's air of generosity was no difficult air to assume.

"Let me finish," Monk requested. "You would have got nothing out of me if you had kept me here till the Last Trumpet. But I have it in my mind that you could have made terms with General Lambert on the strength of my captivity."

Charles shook his head vigorously. He was really enjoying the situation and delighted with the magnanimous part that fate was permitting him to play. But also he was tempted to parry Monk's suspected sagacity by giving him a hint that the King knew very well that magnanimity was little less than inevitable.

"You are wrong, General," he said, with a gracious gravity that well became him. "I could have done nothing of the kind, even if we agree to strain potentialities so far as to admit the possibility of my being allowed to do anything of the kind. Take it for granted, man, that for all I am, by the will of Heaven, your enemy, I am also a gentleman."

"By all means," Monk answered composedly. "I accept you for a gentleman with all my heart. But you are also a man of the world, or should be, after all your rubs, and a politician, since you wish to be King of England, and I think that, if I were in your place, I should try to make some use of my opportunity."

Charles laughed with a gaiety which Monk found infectious. He had a native fund of rough good humour, which he deemed it his duty to himself to conceal on

the present occasion, but he was conscious that the mask was slipping from his face.

"Why, no, your Excellency," Charles protested. "I will not deny, because denial would be foolish to a man of your astuteness, that there did come a moment to my mind when you seemed, if I may say so, the bird in the hand. But the moment was not prolonged." Charles's voice took on a note of gracious entreaty. "Let me, dear sir," he pleaded, "do as I dearly desire to do, and allow me to play the part magnanimous. Something—luck, fortune, chance, destiny—has always been against me. Here, just for an instant, thanks to the over-zeal of a faithful adherent, I find myself able to act as I think a King should act. Grant me the trivial privilege and consent to my humour. Permit me, your Excellency, to wish you a very good afternoon, and a brisk return to England."

Monk was now broadly smiling. Charles's carriage was so disarmingly audacious that it appealed instantly. The cheery way in which the exile awarded a kind of credit to himself for not taking an advantage which, in the same breath, he admitted that it would be idle for him to attempt to take, tickled the Puritan's sense of humour. During the period of his sequestration aboard the *Gander*, Colonel Lane, who had treated him with perfect courtesy, and had afforded him as much comfort as was compatible with the existing conditions, had made no attempt to open any political conversation, had never, however cursorily, alluded to the affairs of England, or the aspirations of the Son of the Man. Monk had realized in his spell of unexpected travel, that such talk was to be reserved for the solemn moment when he was to be brought face to face with the Pretender. And now,

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here was this same Pretender gaily waiving aside all opportunity, and pleasantly implying that his one wish was to say farewell to his unexpected visitor. Monk felt a highly increased respect for, and interest in, Charles Stuart.

"Your Royal Highness," he said amiably, "I believe this strange occasion is too green and raw for profitable parley. But, since the madman who serves you without consulting you — and I think you are to be envied such a servant — has been pleased to pluck me out of Kent like a turnip out of a field, why, I think that I should be foolish not to avail myself of the opportunity which your Royal Highness affects to disdain. If Charles Stuart is indifferent to the chance of speech with George Monk, George Monk is not indifferent to the chance of speech with Charles Stuart."

Monk as he said this looked at the young man opposite to him thoughtfully, like one that was uncertain whether to speak further or no. He decided to speak further.

"You said just now," he asserted, "that you desired my assistance to help you back to the throne of England."

Charles nodded cheerfully. "So I do, faith, heartily," he agreed, and gave Monk back steady stare for steady stare.

"We have never met before," Monk said slowly. "We may never meet again. It is surely the hour to be frank. What have you ever done that I should give you my aid?"

Charles for a moment banished the affable hilarity from his face, and looked as solemn as Monk.

"I am your King," he said with dignity.

Monk shook his head. "With your pardon," he said,



"that is begging the question. I am a professed Republican."

"And think," Charles interrupted, with a great bitterness in his voice, "that kings only exist to be killed."

"No," Monk answered sternly. "The folly of Whitehall is your strongest card of fortune. But were I a King's man, blade and hilt, I should still ask myself what sort of a king you would be like to make, judging you by the life you have lived and the deeds you have done?"

Charles listened to this bitter speech with a face of unchanging patience. "You do not think well of me," was his only comment.

"Why should I?" Monk answered dourly. "What have you done to command my esteem or the esteem of men like me? You cannot win a battle. When the Scots put a crown upon your head you could not keep it on. You dishonour the kingship you claim and the exile you resent by squalid debauch in squalid company, content to live the beggar of princes who despise you, so long as you can get enough of their bounty to gild your grotesque court and pay for your paramours."

Charles listened to this attack with no sign of annoyance. When Monk paused he asked quietly, "Have you anything more to say?"

"I have said enough," Monk answered. "I only said as much to show you why I am not of your party."

"Then let me speak for myself," Charles said calmly. "You should not be ungenerous enough to reproach me with having lost battles. I think even my enemies recognize that I did my best to win them. If I have lived on the gifts of princes, well, a king's son is seldom taught to earn his living, and your friends have laid their hands

upon my inheritance. I was born to wear a crown; my business in life was to be a king. Your party killed my father and drove me overseas, and then you pretend to wonder because the banished man does not play the archangel. It is unworthy of your friends, General Monk; it is unworthy of you."

He drew a deep breath, and then smiled, as if he were amused at his own unfamiliar vehemence. "Enough of this," he continued on a different note. "I fear we should never understand each other."

Monk looked curiously at him. "Who knows?" he said gravely. He kept silence for an appreciable period of time that seemed to Charles to be interpreted by minutes, though it numbered indeed no more than seconds. Then he spoke again.

"Since," he said, "it has pleased Providence in its wisdom to permit a headlong gentleman to whisk me into your presence, we may as well take advantage of his energies to try and understand each other. Shall we sit at this table and talk ourselves dry?"

"With all my heart," Charles answered. He was thrilled with a sudden hope, but he kept his voice steady. Going to the ante-chamber, he gave Lane permission to occupy himself as he pleased for the rest of the day. Then he returned and seated himself at the table, inviting Monk with a gesture to do the like. The two men leaned upon the oak, face to face.

## CHAPTER XXVII

WHAT CHALLIS WROTE TO BARSTOW

COLONEL LANE, thus happily liberated, skipped down the stairs that led to his sister's dwelling with an agility and a velocity comparable only to that of the fortunate owner of the seven-leagued boots in the fairy-tale. In a jiffy he had hurled himself into the living-room, where he found Jane waiting him with a face as eager as his own.

"All is so far well," Lane cried enthusiastically, as he clasped his sister in his arms. "The high contracting parties are cosily closeted together, and whatever may come of their conference, we have done our best and may be content."

Jane returned John's clasp with a like cordiality. Then she liberated herself from his hug and, resting her hands on his shoulders, looked at him admiringly.

"You dear John," she cried, "you good John, you brave John, how gallantly you have done. My lord Ettington gave me but now your message, and my heart beat a salute. Welcome home, hero."

Honest John Lane turned crimson with pleasure to hear his sister's praises. They were as sweet to his ear as the commendations of his King, and more it would not be possible to say.

"The credit is yours, Jane," he protested. "Mine was but the sluggish hand that obeyed the dominion of your

nimble brain." He was brisk to change the subject, for even the praise that came from the lips of Jane or from the lips of his King embarrassed his simple spirit. "Is there a trifle of victuals and drink?" he questioned. "I know not how it is, but the fact that I am free of my prisoner has seemed to provide me with an appetite."

Jane served him with her own hands, jealous of any intrusive presence just then. When my lord Ettington came to her with the good news, she had even sent Willemyn out of the way on some passable pretext, in order that she might have her brother and her brother's story all to herself. She placed a cold pie on the table, and a worthy knuckle of ham, and bread and cheese and wine, and Colonel Lane fell upon the fare without delay. He talked while he ate, and told Jane all she was longing to know, of the cruise of the *Gander* and the landing in Kent, and the midnight raid on Quex and the admirable capture of the great man. He kept silence as to the brief fierce flicker of mutiny and his strenuous suppression of it. That was, as he conceived, incidental to the tale, and he disliked to talk of himself. An ordinary listener, indeed, would think that the credit of the business belonged in the main to Geoffrey Gascoyne and Luke East. But Jane knew better, for Jane knew John.

When John Lane had shot his bolt, and stayed his stomach, he wiped his lips and, turning upon Jane with an amiable pretence of ferocity, he demanded of her an account of her doings during his absence. To his surprise she flushed and paled, as if his question had recalled a happy fancy to distasteful realities. Then she rose and, going towards a cabinet, unlocked a door and brought forth a small sheaf of papers. These she laid upon the

table. Then she stood looking at him who sat and stared at her, amazed.

"You remember," she said gravely, "the paper that I found in Master Challis's letter to Barstow on the day of our arrival in Breda?"

Lane nodded. He remembered it now that Jane spoke of it. Otherwise it had passed from his memory, for he had had many things to think of since then, and Jane, during all the days of preparation for the raid had never spoken of the paper again.

"Well," he said, speaking with a gravity unconsciously modelled on Jane's bearing, "have you found out what it purposed?"

"I have read the secret," Jane answered, "and it cost me some pains to read it, and it is an ugly secret to read."

Briefly she told her brother of the methods she had employed to decipher the secret letter, and of their success. Then she handed him the paper which contained her translation of the cryptic text. It was brief, and, as she said, it made ugly reading. It presented the definite statement that Charles Stuart was willing to consent to the assassination of General Monk, and it urged the recipient to bring this evil news at once to the knowledge of the Puritan general. The letter did not take long to read. When he had read it, Colonel Lane laid it down and looked earnestly at his sister.

"You are quite sure," he asked, "that you have made no error in your version." Truly he felt no doubt, but the matter was so grave that he was staggered.

"I am quite sure," Jane answered. Seating herself by her brother's side, she went over the original paper.

with him, showing him how it was to be read and verifying her interpretation. When she had finished, Colonel Lane rose from his seat with a grim look on his face.

"What are you going to do?" Jane asked quietly. The colonel answered her in a voice as quiet.

"I am going," he said, "to seek out Challis, and call him to account for this treason."

He made a movement towards the door, but Jane, who had risen now, laid a restraining hand upon his arm and checked him.

"Will you be guided by me in this business, dear brother?" she said. "It is in my mind that we should do well to take no instant action. Let us wait and see what happens between his Majesty and General Monk. It may be wiser not to let the traitor know of our knowledge for the hour."

Lane looked dubious for a moment, but his habitual belief in his sister's wisdom asserted itself, and he yielded. Jane then entreated him to leave her for a while.

"Take the air," she said. "The day is as sweet as summer. I want to be alone with my thoughts."

Colonel Lane agreed cheerfully to the suggestion. After the cramping conditions of existence on the *Gander*, he was glad enough to stretch his legs. So he kissed Jane tenderly, caught up his hat and quitted the room, whistling a Cavalier tune as he went.

## CHAPTER XXVIII

### THE EMBARRASSMENT OF COLONEL LANE

THE world of Breda wore so sunny and cheerful a disposition that it pleased the colonel to follow his sister's advice, give himself a holiday, and seek refreshment in the open air from the recent heady events. He had descended half-way down the stairs when his progress was interrupted by the unexpected appearance on the midway landing of Mistress Willemyn Yeoman, who had leisurely ascended thus far. The colonel gaped a little at the young lady, who had entirely faded from his thoughts, as he drew back to let her pass. He was for saluting her and continuing his journey.

This determination, however, did not accord at all with the wishes of the young lady, who seemed frankly delighted at this palpable proof of Colonel Lane's return. She daintily delayed the colonel by laying prettily gloved fingers on his sleeve while she found words for her desire. She had no wish to disturb Jane just then; she had a rather pressing errand to go. She paused at this, smiled a little, blushed a little, and then confessed that she had come in the hope of obtaining the colonel's escort on her way.

The colonel, who had need of reflection and had looked forward to the companionship of his thoughts, was positively ungallant enough to begin turning over in his mind some excuse for not availing himself of the honour

thus unexpectedly offered to him. The young lady, however, as if divining his secret intentions, made haste to anticipate them by assuring the perplexed colonel that she would not presume to trouble him so greatly were it not that she stood in pressing need of advice.

Colonel Lane hastily assured her that there was no one in the world who could advise her so well or so wisely as his sister Jane, but his assurances had no effect upon his listener. Without questioning for a moment the capacities of Jane for giving counsel, the young lady, it seemed, in this particular instance, desired above all things the advice of one of the male sex. She knew no one, it further appeared, whose advice would be so precious to her as the advice of Colonel Lane. The colonel, still wishful for solitude, hinted that perhaps the young lady's father would be a properer confidant for the young lady's difficulties. Willemyn positively declined to entertain this suggestion. The advice she needed was the advice of a soldier, a scholar, a man of the world; in a word, the advice she needed was the advice of Colonel Lane, and that she would have, or she would have none.

Colonel Lane, now perceiving that the young lady was determined in her purpose, and that it would be the extravagance of ungraciousness further to resist her petition, surrendered with as amiable an air of gratification as he could muster. He protested, indeed, against being regarded as either a scholar or a man of the world, but for the rest, any intelligence that he might possess was very heartily at the service of Mistress Willemyn.

Willemyn, obviously delighted at his acquiescence, immediately led the way down the stairs which she had so lately ascended, and the colonel, resigning himself



to his fate, went obediently by her side. It might be held that Colonel Lane need not consider himself so unlucky to have been chosen for a companion on a morning walk by the prettiest girl in all Breda. But Colonel Lane had no high opinion of the Burgomaster's daughter. He knew her for a shameless coquette, and he detested coquettes. He admitted her, indeed, to be pleasing to look at, but he held her to be too self-conscious of her charms to be truly charming, and he considered that her undoubted loveliness was but the attractive cover that masked a petty, frivolous and silly disposition. He was not vain enough to be flattered by her obvious attentions, to which, as he believed, he assigned their right reason, an unbridled desire for conquest.

A few moments later found the oddly assorted couple in the open air. Colonel Lane, resignedly dependent upon the will of his companion, observed, with some satisfaction, that her business, whatever it might be, took her, and in consequence him, along the canal in the direction of the country. There, at least, the air was sweetest, the prospect more extended; thoughts of narrow streets and the press of many dwellings more easily ignored; all qualities of a promenade likely to commend themselves to a gentleman that loved the country.

The colonel seemed to breathe more freely after the pair had left the town behind them, and directed their course along the meadows that fringed the canal. The colonel was far from being in a conversational mood, but the reticence of his manner seemed to have little or no depressing effect upon the young lady who shared his morning walk. She did not, indeed, touch at all upon the matter about which she had professed to be so eager to consult him, but Colonel Lane did not

notice the omission. Willemyn prattled away, discoursing very agreeably of nothing in particular, and the colonel punctuated her discourse with casual observations made at random shot, which seemed to hit the mark well enough. It was almost with a start of surprise that the colonel suddenly noticed that their walk had brought them, the one unconsciously and the other consciously, to a somewhat lonely spot beyond the extreme suburbs of the city. Behind them lay the town, all gables and spires and pinnacles, against the morning sky. About them stretched placid pasture-land, its pastoral calm untroubled by the near neighbourhood of the town. Beyond them, the whole of the Low Countries, nay, more, the whole of the world, seemed stretched like a great green plain to the end of the world. Beside them lay the tranquil waters of the canal showing of a curious blue-green colour that might have been produced by a blending of powdered malachite and crushed turquoise in the morning light.

Hard by, there stood a little wayside bench, and to this Willemyn, abruptly quitting the colonel's side, hurriedly betook herself, and seating herself thereupon invited, or it may be commanded, the colonel with a pretty, peremptory gesture of her hand, to take his place beside her. The colonel, it must be admitted, was heartily tired of his excursion, and eager for it to come to an end. He had been wondering, for a long time past, when his feather-headed companion would fulfil her errand, and allow herself and him to turn homewards. Now, as it seemed, she was calling a wholly unnecessary halt. However, without a positive rudeness, impossible to Colonel Lane, there was nothing for it but to comply with the young lady's caprice, and,

## EMBARRASSMENT OF COLONEL LANE

accordingly, Colonel Lane, with a somewhat long face, took up a position on the bench.

The young lady looked up at her companion with an archness of manner easily recognizable as at once provocative and encouraging by those that are initiated in such mysteries. To this blend of challenge and allure-ment her companion made no manner of response of any like nature. Though John Lane was of a simple nature, he was nothing at all of a simpleton, and he could admit to himself, without immodesty, that it was very plain that the pretty girl was what was called "setting her cap" at him. But his modesty and his shrewdness assured him that this cap-setting process was only indulged in by the young lady because she wished, by hook or by crook, to include the good colonel in the catalogue of her triumphs, and was not a little piqued because his name had not been set down therein long ago.

Colonel Lane was not in the least inclined to pander to the spoilt maid's vanity, by affecting a passion which he did not entertain, in order to give the minx the pleasure of making game of him afterwards, as she made game of all her declared lovers. On the other hand, he was too honest a gentleman to lead the lass on with a show of adoration, only to have the laugh on his side, by wishing her good-bye and walking away whistling at the very moment when she might believe that she had securely netted him. Therefore, the colonel took no hand in the proposed game of courtship, which he regarded as a foolish waste of time.

"You are very glum to-day, dear Colonel Lane," the girl whispered in a voice that she allowed to be unnecessarily tender. "I hope and pray that there is nothing to vex you."

The colonel shook his head and protested good-humouredly that he was in the best of spirits.

"I can well understand why you should be abstracted," the girl continued, with a little gentle sigh and soft glance of appealing admiration, which its target ignored. "You must have too much to think of now, with so many of his Majesty's concerns to consider, and so many affairs of State on your hands, to be able to spare many of your thoughts for a silly little girl like me."

"My dear young lady," the colonel responded, amused by the audacious impudence of the child, "all that you have just said is compact of errors. In the first place, I have very little more to do with his Majesty's affairs than you have. If I had, I trust that I should not allow them ostentatiously to occupy my thoughts so that every jack who passed might be called upon to comment on the gravity of the keeper of the King's secrets. In the second place, I do not think you anything like as silly as you are pleased to pretend to be, and I am very sure that in your heart you do not consider yourself to be silly at all."

This was plain-speaking enough, but it was said with such an amiable candour that it did not sting, and would not have stung even if the girl had been less interested in her game than her manner professed. What did hurt Mistress Willemyn was the entirely fraternal tone in which Colonel Lane couched his little reproof or remonstrance, or whatever the girl might be pleased to call it.

"You must not be angry with me, dear Colonel Lane," she said, with such a winning air of mild submission to his will as would have brought any other man she had ever met to his knees in an instant. Mild submission was not one of Willemyn's characteristics with

which her suitors were most familiar. The colonel only laughed, and declared that he never dreamed of such a thing. The pair sat for perhaps a couple of minutes or so in silence, a silence which the colonel would have been well content to endure, but which seemed interminable and intolerable to the girl. As the colonel was clearly not inclined to break the silence, Willemyn began again.

"Dear Colonel Lane—" she started, and then, as if seeming to recollect something, she caught herself up, and continued: "but perhaps I ought not to be calling you 'Colonel Lane' any longer."

Colonel Lane looked at the young lady with a face of blank surprise.

"And why not, pray, in Heaven's name?" he asked. He was asking himself, with some irritation as well as amusement, if the forward child were about to propose that she should call him John. The young lady explained herself with a pretty air of hesitating apology, her eyes shining the while with admiration.

"I thought, it may be," she said, "that in all probability his Majesty, in return for all that you have done for him, has been pleased to give you advancement. Perhaps you are a general now, perhaps a lord too, or some such thing. Please tell me how I am to address you, for I would not make a mistake."

The colonel felt sorely tempted to box the exceedingly pretty ears of his pretty companion, and the loneliness of that part of the country in which they were now sitting increased the temptation. But he resisted it manfully, and confined himself to wishing that somebody could give her father a hint to that effect. He was tired of her airs and graces, of the impertinence of

her ostentatious hero-worship, of her flagrant resolution to include him among her vassals.

"His Majesty," he said shortly, "has, I am glad to believe, other things to think of at this present than the advancement of every unimportant Cavalier."

"I am not speaking of every unimportant Cavalier," the young lady said, with a little sigh, "but of one very important Cavalier, who has done the King a great service."

Colonel Lane really did not know what to say, so he grunted and said nothing. He was somewhat surprised to find that she knew anything of any service he might have rendered to the King, but took it for granted that she was speaking on guess-work, as, indeed, she was. Willemyn, nothing disconcerted by his taciturnity, went softly on:

"I am sure that, if I were the King, I should be eager to reward you for what you have done."

Colonel Lane felt that it was absolutely essential either to tell the young lady to hold her tongue, or to try to change the subject of their conversation. He adopted the latter course.

"If I remember rightly," he observed, "you told me a little while ago that there was some subject on which you were good enough to desire to take my advice."

He looked at Willemyn as he spoke, and Willemyn looked at him, and he noted, to his surprise, that, though she looked very steadily in his eyes, her cheeks, which were always filled with a very fresh and fair colour, were now all of a sudden flooded with a yet livelier pinkness.

## CHAPTER XXIX

### A SAPPHO OF BRABANT

COLONEL LANE was wholly at a loss to account for the heightened colour and constrained bearing of the young woman. Up to this moment he had endured her companionship and her prattle with a polite air of amiability, as he would have endured the chatter of a child. But now, as he surveyed her glowing cheeks, and shining eyes, and noted the ostentatious agitation of her bosom, he felt, he scarcely knew why, a sudden sense of uneasiness.

Was she, he wondered, going to confide in him the story of some one of her many love-affairs? or, perhaps, and his alarm increased at the thought, the stories of several of her love-affairs? Was she going to entreat from him a fraternal or paternal counsel as to the course she should pursue with one or all of the unfortunate young gentlemen whose hearts were tangled in the toils of the Rose of Breda?

Apparently she was going to consult him on some matter of great delicacy, for, while she was evidently determined to speak her mind, she was also no less evidently in some difficulty as to the precise form or words which she should choose for that same process of delivering her spirit. She plucked nervously at her fingers, she twiddled her pretty little thumbs, and Colonel Lane, embarrassed by her embarrassment, wished her,

if not precisely at the devil, at all events safely housed in her own home, and out of his company.

'After a pause that seemed an interminable æon to the impatient colonel, the young lady began again, speaking with a pretty air of hesitation that would have distracted the hearts of all the Gascoynes and van Poops of her acquaintance, but that, as she could see by shy glances under her lowered lids, had no perceptible effect upon the stony expression of her companion.

"I wish," she said, daintily diffident, "to entreat your advice upon a somewhat delicate matter. What would you advise a young maid to do, if, after a long period during which she had lived perfectly heart-whole, she suddenly found that her affections were seriously engaged?"

As she spoke she turned her glowing countenance full upon the colonel, who, for his part, was cursing himself for being thus suddenly made the confidant of a silly girl's love-affairs. However, it seemed clear that there was no help for it but to give some kind of answer. Wondering a little if the name of the young gentleman she favoured was the name of any one of the young lady's admirers with whom he happened to be familiar, the colonel cleared his throat and spoke to this effect:

"I do not," so he protested, "feel in the slightest degree qualified to proffer an opinion upon so ticklish a problem. But I should have imagined, rather from what I have read than from what has come under my personal observation, that a young lady seldom or never had any difficulty in making it plain to a young gentleman that she was inclined to favour his advances."

So far the colonel, who then became silent. Willemyn, alternately pinking and paling, resumed her discourse.



"So," she admitted, "I had always believed, but of late my confidence has been strangely disturbed. For it so happens that though I have been, as I think, at some pains to make the individual of whom I speak aware of the state of my heart, all my hints, suggestions and innuendoes have been of no avail."

The poor colonel began to fear that this unexpected session of the Court of Love was never going to end. Wherefore he decided that it was high time to bring it to a close. He spoke, therefore, as gruffly as it was possible for him ever to bring himself to speak to any woman.

"In that case, madam," he said, "I think a young lady would be well advised to make one of two uses of her tongue. Either, in the every-day phrase, to hold it, or, if this course were unpleasing, to employ it in making the obtuse swain plainly cognisant of the state of her emotions."

"You would have me," the young woman faltered, "tell the gentleman that I loved him?"

"I would not have you do anything at all," the colonel corrected, "but since you have been good enough to solicit my opinion, I think that you have only two courses open to you, either to speak or not to speak, and you must surely please yourself as to your choice."

"Then," said Willemyn, blushing furiously, "I think I will please myself to speak."

"Good," said the colonel. "So that is settled." He made as if to rise as he spoke, and was about to add some words suggestive of the advisability of returning home, when both his action and his words were amazingly arrested. Willemyn laid a restraining hand upon his arm. Willemyn looked at him with eyes that threatened

tears. Willemyn spoke, very briefly and very much to the point.

"Colonel Lane," she said, in a voice that was no more than a whisper and yet that was as clear as a thunder-clap, "I love you."

If a thunderclap had indeed at that moment shaken the solid globe to its foundations it could scarcely have more astonished Colonel Lane. The green canal and the green pasture lands and the distant windmills seemed for an instant to swim before his eyes and the blue heavens to reel. Rapidly he recovered himself and turned with a frown to the staring child beside him, who sat with tightly clasped hands and brimming eyes.

"Young lady," he said gravely, for he was sensitive to ridicule for all his wisdom, "I fear that I fail to understand this pleasantry."

"You fail to understand if you think that it is pleasantry," the girl persisted, with a queer little eager expression on her pretty face that he had never seen there before. "I love you and I want to tell you that I love you."

To say that Colonel Lane was astounded, would be to give but a poor account of his case. He was staggered, he was annoyed; also he was concerned for the girl's reason. He recognized in swift flashes of thought that the foolish young woman might have been led by a misdirected spirit of hero-worship to admire him unduly. But the whole thing was preposterous and must be stopped.

"My dear young lady," he said, speaking as gently as his medley of surprise and vexation would permit, "I need scarcely say that I can only admit myself to be highly honoured by the confidence you have vouch-

safed, a confidence, believe me, that I shall most religiously respect. You have spoken, I am sure, out of the kindness of a sympathetic heart, and you leave me somewhat at a loss what to say."

"There is only one thing to say," the young lady retorted with a vehemence that obscured the lack of logic in her remark. "Either you do love me or you do not love me."

The poor colonel was woefully embarrassed. He had never been in such a situation before; it had never occurred to him that he could be in such a situation, and he did not know how to carry himself with decorum. It seemed to him in his distraction that the best course open to him was to temporize.

"My dear young lady," he said, "I must admit that you find me somewhat taken aback. Your unexpected statement has been so completely surprising that I think perhaps the best thing under the circumstances would be for us both to think over the problem a little more carefully than is possible under the present conditions. It is due to yourself to be very sure that you know your own mind."

It is due to the colonel to note that he was acting with his habitual honesty. He was not in love with the girl, he had never had the least suspicion that the girl could seriously consider herself to be in love with him. Another man, an Ettington or a Garlinge, would have taken advantage of the unexpected confession in one way or another, and would have found means to flatter the girl's vanity, however he might intend that the adventure should terminate. But the colonel was himself and no other, and he acted as he did. The girl rose to her feet.

A LETTER UNTO HIS MAJESTY

"I know my own mind," she said firmly, "and I want to know yours. Can you put your hand upon your heart and tell me that you love me?"

The colonel could do nothing of the kind, and his discomfort wrung him. Willemyn smiled wistfully.

"You are dreadfully honest," she said, "and I suppose that is one of the reasons why I am so fond of you. But if you will not have my love nobody else shall, nor shall I consent to live to remember that I offered myself and was disdained. Farewell, dear gentleman."

As she spoke she turned, and, running to the edge of the bank, flung herself plump into the waters of the canal.

## CHAPTER XXX

### AQUATIC SPORT

FOR a few brief bewildering seconds the colonel was staggered out of his characteristic equanimity, and found himself during those seconds positively at a loss not merely what to do but what to think. In all his days, in all his experience of the world, he had been faced by no event so amazing as the event which had just happened, the unbelievable event. An assault, a conflagration, an earthquake, a whirlwind, a tidal wave, would have found him instantaneously alert, quick-eyed, quick-eared, quick-fingered to take occasion by the throat, quick-witted and quick-limbed to guess what were best on the moment to do, and so guessing, to do it. But this astonishing fact seemed so out of the range of all possible accidents and calamities that, for the instant, it knocked the wind out of him as completely as if he had been butted in the stomach by a battering-ram.

Only for the instant, however. When his reeling senses, recovering, realized that the space of earth by his side, tenanted a second ago, was now suddenly vacant, when in the green waters below him he saw a floundering huddle of soused draperies that bobbed and dipped and bobbed again in silence, he recognized that he was not dreaming an ugly and silly dream, but that he was wide awake and that he was called upon to be brisk and active.

Brisk and active, accordingly, he promptly was. Quicker than winking he had kicked off his shoes, shed with incredible swiftness cloak, sword, belt and coat, and then, with arms well poised above his head, he took the short run to the edge of the canal and dived into its glaucous waters. Even as he dived, so tricky is the wit, he had a sudden memory of boyhood and of a certain pool which was his beloved bathing-place, and before his finger-tips had touched the surface of that Dutch canal he had seemed to smell the scent of an English meadow-land and to see the sunlight dappling the water with the shadows of spring leaves.

Colonel Lane rose to the surface within a few inches of the drifting girl. She was, as he guessed, supported from sinking by the amplitude of her gowns, which were not yet sufficiently saturated to drag her down, and in another moment the colonel, keeping himself afloat by vigorous strokes of his legs, had caught hold of her. A hundred seconds had not ticked themselves out on the dial of time since Willemyn had quitted the colonel's side, and now the pair were again together, but this time, and for the first time, one of the colonel's arms was about the girl's body.

The floating folly was so still that for a moment the colonel feared a great fear, but this was swiftly dissipated when he felt the pressure of a girdle of soft, wet arms about his neck and felt a soft, wet face close to his own. To be candid, the embracing girl was no slight weight, and for a second the colonel feared that the girl in her terror and helplessness would do after the fashion of so many folk that find themselves out of their depth in water, fresh or salt, and would desperately hamper or defeat the efforts of her rescuer.

Here, however, Colonel Lane's alarm was unjustified, and was soon allayed. The girl, indeed, clung to him, but she did so without restraint and without any display of terror. Her blue eyes looked tenderly into those of the colonel.

"Are you going to save me?" she asked, with a quality of emotion in her voice which was lost upon her labouring companion.

"Of course," the colonel spluttered, as drily as was possible under the condition, and then, without any desire to continue a conversation begun under such whimsical conditions, he elevated his voice to its highest pitch and began to bawl lustily for help. He was keeping himself and his charge afloat now easily enough; he could manage to swim with his free arm; the water, though disagreeably cold, was not benumbing, and as they slowly drifted, the colonel, still bellowing, kept a sharp look-out for the easiest place of landing.

As for Willemyn, however, she appeared to be perfectly content with her situation, and to regard the waters of the canal as a wholly enjoyable habitation when Colonel Lane was her fellow-lodger therein. Her wicked little wet face was smiling as, when he paused for a moment to take breath between his yells and his strokes, she spoke to him again.

"If you are going to save me," she said, very softly and caressingly, "you must save me for good and all."

The colonel was, pardonably, in no mood for dalliance. The position of affairs was growing momentarily more and more unpleasant; the help for which he clamoured had not appeared, and he could see that there would be considerable difficulty in scaling impeded the banks of the canal. So he was surely to be forgiven, and Willemyn

admitted as much to herself later, if he answered somewhat gruffly, "We will talk of that hereafter," and therewith made haste to renew his shoutings for succour. Yet even in that instant he was aware of a strange sense of pleasure and pride and pity and desire aroused in him by the clasp of those round arms, by the sight of that fair wet face, with its tousle of dripping hair, by the sound of that sweet voice, persistently and audaciously wooing. He assured himself that he was furiously angry with the impetuous, feather-brained girl, but he did not need to assure himself that he found an unexpected pleasure in holding her in his embrace.

Any further aquatic conversation was, however, at this point happily prevented by the belated arrival of help. A drowsy guardian of a distant barge, a busy farmer in a neighbouring field, had the one his dreams and the other his toils first interrupted and then dissipated by the colonel's trumpeting. The one came to aid from land, the other by the water way. In a little time Colonel Lane and Willemyn were no longer the river-god and river-goddess of an unrehearsed pastoral interlude. The bargeman hauled them on to his sluggish craft, and slowly propelled his vessel, with her unexpected passengers, to the spot where the farmer awaited them, backed by a little group of grinning peasants, who seemed to have assembled from all the points of the compass to populate emptiness and to welcome the dripping man and the dripping maid to the solidity of earth again.

Both man and maid, after they were aided from barge to bank, had to admit to their hearts that they cut a sufficiently grotesque figure. The girl's voluminous clothing oozed water like a sponge, but, thanks to its bulk, she



was spared the pains of any affront to her delicacy by the revelations which, in thinner and fewer garments, such a ducking would have rendered inevitable.

Colonel Lane, as he gathered up his discarded apparel, hurriedly explained in his briskest Dutch that the young lady, standing too near to the edge of the canal and looking over too curiously, had lost her footing and slipped in. The farmer was easily persuaded by promise of handsome reward to conduct the pair to his dwelling, no great distance off, where his wife and he, between them, could manage to furbish up some change of raiment for man and maid. To this house, therefore, after the bargeman had been rewarded beyond his dreams by the liberal-handed colonel, the party set off, the farmer leading the way, Lane and Willemyn following, and the little group of onlookers bringing up the rear and commenting phlegmatically upon the unexpected incident that served to enliven their morning.

Reserving the order of the parts that he and Willemyn had played when they started on their promenade, Colonel Lane now talked volubly, with the laudable intention of making the situation as easy as possible for his mischievous, bedraggled companion. Willemyn, as if accepting the change of conduct, was suddenly converted from a chatterer into a mute. She did not speak a word during the whole course of the pilgrimage to the farmer's cottage. Once there, she kept silence while the farmer explained to his good wife his appearance in company with a streaming man and a streaming woman, and still silent, she disappeared with the good woman into her bedroom to effect the necessary change of attire.

The colonel, with the aid of his kindly and handsomely rewarded host, speedily metamorphosed himself into

as good a likeness of a comfortable Dutch farmer as comfortable Dutch clothes could effect upon his essentially English personality. He then retraced his steps with all possible speed to the town, albeit he found rapid progress somewhat difficult to accomplish in the unfamiliar garments that swathed him. At the "Long Leopard" he succeeded without difficulty and with no great delay in obtaining a coach, in which he rode back to the abode of the friendly farmer.

Willemyn was new-dressed and ready by the time he arrived, and the solicitous colonel was pleased to perceive that she showed no signs of being any the worse for her wetting. Very pretty and demure she looked in the homely habiliments that the farmer's wife had amiably spared from her meagre wardrobe. Her dabbled hair was hidden away under a housewife's cap, and her smooth cheeks, instead of showing pallor as the result of the immersion, were as bravely red as the reddest tulips that ever flourished. The spirit of silence, however, which had deserted her during the colonel's absence, during which time she had chatted most pleasantly with the good wife, returned instantaneously with the colonel's return. Silently she entered the coach with Lane; she did no more than wave a mute farewell to the befriending pair, and silent she remained as the coach drove off in the direction of her father's house.

## CHAPTER XXXI

### A DIFFERENCE OF OPINION

THOSE that are familiar with Montrachel's "*Histoire des Traités Secrets de l'Europe depuis le commencement du dix-septième siècle jusqu'à nos jours*," will, no doubt, remember a chapter in the third volume which he calls "The Secret Treaty of Breda." In this chapter the historian professes to give the full and minute account of the conversation that took place between Charles and Monk in Master Yeoman's tall house by the canal. His chief authorities are a couple of Dutch political pamphlets of the period and some pages from the fragmentary and probably spurious *Memoirs of Pippet* that were published in French in Amsterdam in 1689. He records at a length, which it is not necessary to follow, the various steps in the colloquy which led more quickly than might have been expected to a better understanding between the two men that had been enemies and were now rapidly becoming friends. It is curious to note how, as the talk proceeded, each man became aware of how very much his own views of statecraft and government were in reality in accord with those that were held by his opponent. Little by little, or, rather, to be more accurate, much by much, the two adversaries approached each other, their antagonism thawing before the glow of their enjoyable discoveries. After a while nothing seemed amiss between them, and, but for a

growing sense that the spirit of royalty was poisoning her pinions, and that the spirit of republicanism was drooping her wings, the reader feels that it was all one but that they had become George and Charles to one another, so happy was their attitude, so warm their accord.

Monk began by talking cautiously; Charles began by listening warily. But, as the seconds ebbed, the caution of the one and the wariness of the other dwindled with them. It was plain to both the high contracting parties, that an understanding was desirable; it soon became plain that an understanding was not difficult to arrive at; was, in fact, easy to arrive at. And so, bit by bit, the understanding was arrived at. It may be that Charles, with his lively sense of humour, appreciated the risible possibilities of the position more than Monk, with his more sluggish temperament, did, but he certainly did not enjoy it more. Every minute of that amiable conversation seemed to lift a load of care from Monk's shoulders. His countenance cleared, his manner grew milder; the visible satisfaction with which he greeted each new proof of agreement more obviously unrestrained.

So much was done that well nigh all seemed done. Monk stretched his arms and gave a sigh of relief.

"I think, Sire," he said — and he did not use the regal salutation for the first time — "that your friends did better than they guessed in bringing us together. It is admirable how the change of a few words can clear the air between a brace of sensible fellows."

Charles nodded approval. He was hugging himself for joy at what had befallen. While the question was vexed, while the settlement seemed still uncertain, he was as collected and sensible as you please. But now,

when all was, as it were, signed and sealed, he felt almost too delighted to speak without betraying his delight too patently.

Monk continued his harangue. "I gave you some sharp words a while ago," he said, "and you tasted them with a manly valour that took me. I weighed you very scrupulously in the balance of my mind, and I found you of a regal quality that is much to my liking."

Charles beamed with satisfaction. It was, indeed, a triumph to have won over this Stubborn, this Puritan, this Republican. Charles was not vain enough to attribute to himself all the honours of the triumph. He was clearly aware that if Monk did not find it to his own advantage to help Charles, Charles would never be helped.

"I am giving you my friendship," Monk said, in a steady voice, "but I am giving you more than my friendship. I am giving you the crown of England."

"I have always heard," Charles said, smiling, "that you are a man of few words, but, for me, your words are golden."

"I am your man now," Monk affirmed. "I see you, and I like you. You acted mighty kingly in setting me free. That was so much to your credit. Maybe it was the only thing you could do, but the way you did it was winning. Yet I liked you still better for the way you took the whips I had to sting you with. Therefore, I believe that in coming to this understanding, we are doing England and ourselves a good turn."

Charles rubbed his long hands together and nodded agreement. "I am quite of a mind, Your Grace," he said gleefully.

Monk raised his heavy eyebrows. "Your Grace?"

he echoed interrogatively, with the suggestion of a smile upon his heavy face.

Charles clapped him on the shoulder. "If you make me an English King," he said gaily, "the least I can do is to make you an English duke. How would Albemarle suit you for a title? You have some claim thereto, I believe."

Again a faint smile softened the grimness of Monk's countenance.

"We can consider my poor needs and meeds later," he said. "In the meantime it has been, and, indeed, still is, my business to be frank with your Majesty."

Charles laughed heartily. "You have, indeed, been frank," he declared. "Frank as satire, frank as calumny, frank as the frankest of all frank devils, and I swear that I like you the better for it."

"What would you have?" Monk said slowly. "Everything that I heard of you was to your disfavour, your discredit. You were cited to me as a failure, a ne'er-do-well. Those that watched you closely, those that were in your confidence, and that betrayed your confidence in return for our moneys — painted you persistently as a nincompoop, a pitiful debauchee, with his heart ever pinned to a woman's petticoat."

As Monk retailed this record in his deep, rolling voice, Charles laughed again, loud and long.

"I cannot help it, General," he protested. "I am fond of women. I declare I find them the sweetest toys in the world to play with." He paused for a moment and then added, with a malicious grin, "But you, yourself, as it seems, are not altogether indifferent to their charms. What of this house of Quex?"

"Evil hearts," Monk answered, "prompt evil tongues to evil speech. Mr. Smith of Quex is my old and very good friend, with whom, at rare seasons, I love to take my ease and to forget a foolish world over a wise game of chess. Simple enough. But, because Mistress Smith is a comely woman, knaves must needs insinuate naughtiness."

"Knaves will be knaves," Charles admitted, with a solemn face. He changed the subject instantly. "I should dearly like," he said, "to know the names of those good friends who ate my bread, and misnamed me and betrayed me."

Monk shook his head. "So much knowledge, Sire," he answered, "I must, with all duty, deny. Statesmen must sometimes use these poisoned weapons. I grieve for it, but they must."

Charles accepted the argument with a grimace. "You cannot guess how it galls me," he declared, "to think that there have been men by my side, professing friendship, loyalty, devotion, who were, all the while, drawing your money and selling me piecemeal. I find it hard to think that I could have such men about me and be fooled by their feigning. But, indeed, I believe there be none such near me now."

Monk looked at his King with an expressionless countenance.

"I hope not, Sire," he said. "But, if there were, it would be of little moment. There will be no need of such rascals henceforward, since you are willing to be England's King."

"Willing and ready," Charles asserted, gaily. "Well, has your Grace anything more to say to me?"

"Little more," Monk answered. "Of course, I take for granted your Majesty's adherence to the Protestant faith. I would not speak of this if there had not been certain rumours to the contrary."

"Fables, duke, fables," Charles asserted. "Why, when our dear mother was for making Gloucester a Catholic, it was I, in the main, who restrained her."

"Good," Monk said. "Of course, your Majesty will accord amnesty to all those that yesterday you would have called rebels, and whom to-morrow you will call your faithful subjects."

"With all my heart," Charles replied cordially, "save to those that signed my father's death-warrant. Never to one of them."

"So be it," Monk agreed. "We love them no more than you." He paused for a moment with the air of one that welcomes an end of business; then, as if he suddenly recollected some matter that had been overlooked, he addressed the King with an air that was almost jovial.

"Now, your Majesty," he said, "there is only one petty matter to settle."

Charles looked surprised. It seemed to him that the momentous conversation had covered every inch of the kingly ground. "What may that be?" he asked, the surprise he felt presented in his voice.

Monk leaned across the table and half whispered three simple words. "Your Majesty's marriage."

Simple though the words were, they had a startling effect upon their hearer. Charles pushed back his chair and stared at Monk with scarcely less amazement and repugnance in his gaze than he might have shown if the homely face of Monk had suddenly bristled with a



fringe of Medusa's snakes. "My marriage!" he repeated, in angry alarm.

Monk smiled at the prince's evident perturbation. "Your Majesty," he said, "surely did not propose to reign a celibate?" Then, seeing that the expression of annoyance did not fade from Charles's face, Monk continued in a more emphatic tone. "Naturally, your Majesty must marry to secure the succession. There are many foreign princesses for us to choose from, for the ladies that would have disdained you yesterday will be proud of a sign of your favour to-morrow."

He kept silence for some seconds, studying with a perplexed curiosity the frowning face of Charles, who was struggling to collect his shaken senses. He felt as one might feel that found a buried treasure, only to find it turn into withered leaves between his fingers. With an effort he controlled his emotions, and, leaning on his elbows, faced his companion doggedly.

"Hark you, General," he said sharply, "I am a most amenable fellow, but in this matter of my marriage I wish to have my own way."

Monk nodded and smiled good-humouredly. "Assuredly," he said, "your Majesty's wishes would be consulted. May I make bold to ask on what royal lady you have cast a favouring eye?"

Charles gave him instant and emphatic answer. "On none," he said simply, and the statement seemed to relieve Monk. "Then your Majesty has a free mind?" he hazarded.

Charles rose to his feet and paced the room. He was evidently greatly agitated, and Monk watched him, thoughtful and perplexed. Presently he came to a halt and addressed Monk again.

"You ask," he said, "if I have a free mind. Devil a bit. Never was a man more bound, or more happily bound, than I."

Now Monk looked really anxious. Could Charles have been foolish enough to entangle himself in some clandestine marriage? "Your Majesty's meaning?" he questioned.

Charles answered slowly and steadily. "I am pledged heart and hand, soul and body, to marry Mistress Jane Lane, the sister of that gallant gentleman who brought us together."

Monk frowned fiercely, but he strove to keep his temper. Here was amazing, hateful foolishness that must be swiftly dealt with. "Come, Sire," he said, "we have proved a friendly couple, and have talked together very sensibly. Let us leave Mistress Lane out of the argument."

Charles brought his closed hand down upon the table with an angry bang. "We cannot do that, man," he cried. "I cannot, and you cannot, and I will not, so there is an end. I am sworn to marry Mistress Lane."

Monk leaned back and pressed his finger-tips together thoughtfully. A student of men, he saw that this potential King of his was in a headstrong mood and ready to flog himself into a passion of obstinacy. Monk was pleased with the day's work, and unwilling to see it shattered. He resolved to be diplomatic and tactful.

"Come, sir," he said in a voice that he did his best to render conciliatory, "we must reason as men of experience. I am sure that the lady you honour will prove no incubus. If you and she have changed promises, possible enough yesterday, you and she must be aware

that such promises are pie-crust to-day. If the lady is wise, she will never boggle at the half-honours. The left hand, Sire, is enough for the sweet lady."

Charles flung himself plump into the chair he had abandoned, thrust, as was his wont, his hands deep into his breeches pockets, and surveyed the floor moodily. The world had suddenly changed for him from rose-red to ash-grey. His mind was in a whirl. He wanted the love of Jane Lane as he had never wanted anything in his life. But for an hour and more he had been a King, and the thought that that hour was no better than a mirage choked him. Only that very morning he had told his lover, and had told himself, with the pulse of truth in every syllable, that he had abandoned all thought of kingship, that he only lived for love, that the permission to live with his wife in the American Colonies topped the measure of his ambition. And now all was changed, all, except his earnest, his abiding love.

He turned a haggard face on Monk, and shook his head.

"You are out of your reckoning, General," he declared — the duchy of Albermarle had vanished into thin air under the stress of this dilemma — "Mistress Lane is no such minion of the moon. She and I are no pair of gypsies to jump broomsticks. I know her temper. She is for the wedding-ring and all; and if she were not, which is unbelievable, she would not be the dear woman I love."

General Monk did the best that a grave Puritan and Republican could do to look knowing. It was not very successful, but at least it represented his utmost endeavour.

"Then it seems," he said, with a discreet approach to a wink, "that it must be my task to persuade her to the contrary."

Charles gaped at him, in a frank chaos of bewilderment. In the hideous muddle to which the discussion seemed now to be reduced untimely, his sense of humour at least allowed him to see some plain facts plainly.

"Why, General," he protested, "I took you for a Puritan that would tolerate no looseness. I took you for a Republican, to whom all folk were equal. What has warped this change in your way?"

Monk showed himself no whit disconcerted by the attack of Charles. "While I was plain John Monk of the Commonwealth," he replied composedly, "I may very well have entertained such views. If I am to be Duke of Albermarle and your Majesty's servant, I must look at things and women with another eye."

Charles made a grimace. "You are, indeed, turning Cavalier with a vengeance," he sneered.

Monk was unmoved by the taunt. "If I am turning Cavalier, as your Majesty is pleased to assert," he answered, "I do so because I think it is the best course for England, and the surest way out of her present distractions. But I will not be Cavalier to no purpose, as it would prove if I yielded to this folly. The King of England cannot marry Mistress Lane."

Again Charles struck the table a sounding blow. He was angry at being crossed, angry to find his passion a theme for argument, angry because he was conscious that, by the way of the world, Monk had the right end of the argument. "By God, sir," he cried, "King Edward Fourth of blessed memory married Elizabeth Woodville."



Charles's display of historical knowledge made no visible impression on the stubborn stolidity of Monk. If it cost him an effort to preserve his patience he made no sign of it. "That was a long time ago, Sire," he commented gruffly, "and many cats have kitted since then."

Charles leaned a little nearer to him, and spoke in a low voice, that was almost a whisper.

"Then here is a deed of to-day to give me colour," he said confidently. "I will tell you a secret. I am very sure that my brother James is at this present privately contracted in marriage to Mistress Anne Hyde, who is of no higher degree than Mistress Lane."

As Monk listened to this communication, his face darkened, and his anger showed in his voice.

"If," he said, sternly, "one royal brother has made a mis-marriage, there is all the more reason that the other and elder should not. But we waste time in this discussion. Once for all, Mistress Lane can never, and shall never, be queen of England."

Charles faced Monk's authority with a doggedness as obstinate and uncompromising. "Then, by that showing," he said, "I shall never be King, for I have given her my word, and I mean to keep my word."

All through the conference between the man who claimed to be King, and the man who carried his republicanism like a flag which, at last, he was ready to lay at the feet of his master, Monk had borne himself with the somewhat awkward amiability of a dancing bear. But now, in an instant, the bear was unmuzzled, unringed, unroped; the bear shook itself in its freedom, terrible, menacing.

"No more foolery," he cried. "I thought for this

hour past, that I was talking with a man whom it would be worth while to make King of England. For, by Jehovah, it is I who make you King, or who leave you to rot in exile. You must do as I wish, or, by the living God, you shall never set sole on English soil again."

Charles's anger blazed as hot as Monk's, but even as the habitually imperturbable Monk had allowed himself to flare into a rage, so the habitually emotional Charles held his anger at a white, quiet heat. He shrugged his shoulders and spoke with a cool insolence which he enjoyed, as a gambler enjoys fingering the last coin that he can fling on the table.

"To the devil with England," he declared, "sooner than that I should yield on this, which is of the very essence of my honor. Here is a sweet lady that has graced me with her love when I was an empty-pocketed tatterdemalion rascal, and shall I turn upon her and renounce her dear dominion because I have the chance to set a gold circle upon my forehead, that would become her brow as well as mine?" He stopped speaking for an instant, looking steadily at Monk the while; then he spoke again, as one that speaks the last word. "No, General. No, no, no! On this I stand resolved, and there is no use talking."

Monk was now in a furious temper. He looked as if he would like to take Charles by the throat and strangle him; he was well-nigh sick with indignation at what seemed to him to be the imbecility of the prince.

Even Charles was unable to restrain a sigh. In spite of himself he could not refrain from thinking how different his lot might be if only Jane Lane were a little less scrupulous in the cleanness of her tenour of life. But with the next second Charles had stifled the sigh.

Monk saw that it was to be a struggle of wits between the two men, and that the victory would be hard for him to win. "You wear an obstinate face," he said; "but I can be obstinate, too, and on this point I cannot yield."

"I have nothing more to say," Charles answered coldly. He was quite conscious of the extent of his sacrifice, but its very magnitude exalted his spirits. If a man fails to be a king, there is, at least, some glow of consolation in the thought that he succeeds in being a hero. Monk looked fixedly at him, read unchangeable determination on his face, and saluted him.

"I have the honour to wish you a good day," he said sourly.

Charles was instantly the urbane and gracious host. "You are a stranger in Breda," he said. "If you will suffer me to advise you, you will go to Master Peter Yeoman. He is an Englishman that happens to be burgo-master here, and he will be able to aid your Excellency to the speediest return to England. One of my gentlemen shall conduct you to his dwelling."

Monk bowed. "You are very good," he said. Charles went to the door of the ante-chamber, and, summoning therefrom Ettington, bade him conduct the General to the abode of Master Peter Yeoman. Charles's face was of purpose radiant. He did not wish the Cavaliers to know of the failure of the interview, lest such knowledge might imperil Monk's safety. He extended his hand and took Monk's hand cordially. "Farewell for the hour," he said cheerily. "We have had a good talk that has warmed the cockles of my heart."

Monk's countenance gave no sign that he understood the motive of the King's demeanour. He saluted Charles

and followed Ettington from the room. The other Cavaliers at once entered, clamouring to know what had happened, but Charles refused to enlighten them. The time was not ripe, he said, and dismissed them to their pleasures. When he was alone, he stood for a while with his chin upon his breast, deep in thought. Then he, too, left the room, and made his way to the apartments of the Lanes.



## CHAPTER XXXII

### A NOBLE FEIGNING

CHARLES knocked at Jane's door, which was opened by Jane herself. The girl gave a cry of joy as she greeted her visitor. "May I come in, Jane?" Charles questioned. Jane welcomed him in a rapture. "You have never to ask for audience," she cried, "nor were you ever more welcome than now."

She led him into the room, and then turned and faced him, her cheeks glowing, her eyes all eagerness. "I felt sure," she said, "that you would come to see me. Tell me your news."

She was deceived by the gaiety that reigned on Charles's face, and was convinced that the King's news would be good news. Trembling with excitement, she waited for him to speak.

"Mistress Mouse," Charles said playfully, "what will you say to me, when I tell you that I have set your old lion free."

Jane caught her breath and clapped a hand to her heart. "What do you mean?" she gasped. She dared not realize the disappointment, the defeat that the King's words implied.

"I mean, sweeting," Charles answered tenderly, "that General Monk and I have shaken hands and parted."

Jane groaned. "Has all gone to naught?" she cried, and unfamiliar tears flooded her eyes.

"The game was well played," Charles answered, with a smile, "but old Monk is not a man to frighten, not a man to bully."

"I never thought that," Jane asserted, striving to control her sorrow, "but, oh, my liege, I did hope that when he met you face to face—"

Charles interrupted her gently. "Well, dearest one," he said, "let me end for you. You thought that, when he met me face to face, he would be so captivated by this saturnine countenance of mine, that he would clasp me in his arms and say to me, 'Charles, if you love me, be King of England.' Come now, was it not so?"

Jane had a frown for Charles's ostentatious light-heartedness. But she had recovered her self-possession by now, and, if it was the King's will to take his loss carelessly, it was her duty to chime with his humour.

"You make a jape," she protested, "where I was grave enough, but, indeed, I think my thoughts ran somewhat in that fashion."

"Well, it was nothing like that, I promise you," Charles answered. "The Puritan so scolded me, berated me, taunted me, mocked me, lampooned me, libelled me, denied me, defied me and derided me, that I felt for all the world like some young scrub at Eton tasting Master Switch."

Jane gave a little shiver of indignation. "The sacrilegious knave!" she murmured. Charles smiled at her anger and continued:

"I think he was a bit in the right of it, sweetheart, though his words pricked like nettles." He made an impatient movement with his hands, as if he wished to thrust the trouble away from him. "No more of old Monk," he pleaded. "The thing is done now, done and

damned, and here I stand before you, no more and no less than a poor Scottish gentleman without a bawbee in his pocket, who wants to woo, win, and wed the bonniest English lass that ever grew in England's garden of roses."

He stopped to laugh at himself. "My metaphor is a bit mixed," he admitted, "but my meaning is as clear as a mill-pool."

Jane sighed. She had built such brave hopes upon her brother's adventure, and she could not choose but marvel to find Charles taking his defeat so easily, even though he sweetened his heedlessness by his wooing. "Must you always be talking love-talk?" she asked, with a faint impatience.

"Always," Charles answered instantly; "always, Brightness, when you are by. Dear my love, are you out of conceit with your suitor, with his thirty years of failure, his idle hands and his empty pockets?"

The girl turned to him eagerly. "Charles," she cried, "you know, as well as I know, that I would tramp the highways with you, and be glad, and eat black bread with you behind a hedge, and be happy. There is no place that would not be a King's dwelling, and no food that would not be royal fare, in your company."

Charles caught both her hands in his joyously. "There is such a royal ring in your speech," he said, "and such a loyal light in your eyes, that I could not choose but believe you, though I were as cynical as old Nick. Great Heaven, dear girl, what, after all, is a kingdom, and a reign? A few years of gilded care, of glittering vexation, and then, at the end, perhaps a tomb at Westminster, and, perhaps, a scaffold at Whitehall."

His voice had dropped to sadness as he uttered the last

words, and its melancholy made the girl shudder. "Charles, Charles!" she protested, "think of what you owe to your people."

Charles shrugged his shoulders and smiled mockingly. "The English people," he said, "the sweet English people. What do I owe to the English people? A father's murder, a life in exile, the reign of Cromwell yesterday, the reign of Monk to-day, these are the debts that I owe to the English people."

Jane flushed, and drew herself up. "Your Majesty is unjust," she said. "There are many kinds of English folk. I am an Englishwoman, the least of thousands like me who would give their lives for you with light hearts. My brother is an Englishman, one of the best among thousands like him, that have fought, and will fight, for you; that have died, or would have died, for you. Indeed, there are many kinds of English folk."

Charles took the vehement rebuke with a kindling colour and applauding hands. "You are in the right, Jane," he protested, "and you shame me for seeming ungrateful. But those that love me over yonder cannot, for all their love, set me on the throne again, and, indeed, I care not. Having you I have all, and so now, Jane, like honest Jack and dainty Jill, let us talk of our future. If you are willing to wed Master Penniless Adventurer, why, let us be married at once, and face the world together."

He made to take her in his arms as he spoke, but the girl recoiled and eluded him. She was longing to take him at his word, but her love for the King was loftier than her love for the man, and she was harassed by the fear that she did not know all, that there was more to tell of the rift between Charles and Monk than Charles

had told. She looked at her lover with shining eyes. "Do you really want me, Charles?" she asked.

Charles's answer was to clasp the girl in his arms and to shower kisses upon her with a sweet vehemence that took her breath away. Honest with herself, she found the proceeding pleasant, and suffered it to endure; even gave where she took, and gave gladly.

"Do I really want you, my angel," she heard her lover murmuring, and listened with a languorous delight. But at the back of her joy a voice seemed to be calling, a voice that first whispered and then muttered and then thundered that all was not well with the world, that something was wrong with the world, that the time was no time for love-making.

Jane was conscious, even while she surrendered herself in a rapture to her lover's embrace, and listened in a rapture to her lover's honeyed words, that her business just then was not with kisses and whispers and dalliances, but with big issues. She was wondering, even while she clung to her lover, what had occurred to break off the negotiations between Charles and Monk; between the rain of his kisses, she was thinking insistently that if only she had been by, the difficulties might have been belittled. While her throbbing heart was entreating her to yield herself to her suitor, her busy brain was commanding her to seek out General Monk before he could leave Breda, and try the last.

Jane was not crazed with vanity, but she did devoutly believe that the issues were so simple that, if they were set before the General with the simplicity that a woman can sometimes command more surely than a man, they could not fail to convince him of the gain to himself and to England if he came to terms with Charles. But,

against this cool, deliberate wisdom, her newly-heated blood warred furiously. All the passionate pulses of her body were longing to take her lover at his word, to give herself to him as his wife, to roam the world with him, reckless of consequences.

Jane's reason gripped her senses tightly and controlled them, almost conquered them. It was worth while to make a final try for Monk's alliance. If it failed, there was still the marriage, the vagabondage, the ragged rapture, waiting to be claimed. To take her lover at his word now, would be, so she felt, to betray him. If she could help him to his kingdom, she would do so. If she failed there was still plenty of time for her to become the wife of plain Charles Stuart, and see what fortune might send. Never for one moment, did it occur to Jane that, if Charles were to be King, he would still seek her in marriage. She knew the world, and England, and the Cavaliers, too well for that, and she did not dream that the King could be less wise.

Delicately she avoided her wooer's caresses; daintily she made it plain that she wished to be liberated from her lover's embrace. Drawing a little apart with flushed cheeks and gleaming eyes, at once warm with passion and cold with wisdom, she addressed the suitor who was first of all her King.

"Charles," she said, "you have taken me unawares; you have confused me with your news and troubled me with your loving. I must have no less than a long hour for thought."

"What is there to think about?" Charles protested impatiently. "Here am I plain man, and you perfect woman. I, man, woo you, woman, to be my wife. I love you. You love me. What is there to think about?"

"I am no perfect woman," Jane retorted, "and my imperfection demands a time of thought. Did I not understand from my Lord Ettington that your Majesty had promised to visit the tennis court this afternoon?"

Charles shrugged his shoulders. "Then my Majesty will break his promise royally," he said.

"Let me entreat your Majesty to keep your promise," Jane said gravely. "While you are watching the war of racquets between Sir John Dawlish and my Lord Garlinge, I shall be busy with my thoughts."

Charles strove to rebel, but Jane, who was now wholly mistress of her spirit and her senses, had her way. She packed her protesting lover off to watch the tennis-play, and, when she was very sure that he was indeed gone on this idle errand, she put her cloak and hood about her, and, issuing into the streets of Breda, made her way with a steady swiftness towards the dwelling of Master Peter Yeoman.

## CHAPTER XXXIII

### RENUNCIATION

**M**ONK looked steadily into the face of the girl whom Master Peter Yeoman had brought into his presence, and had left alone with him. He had told her at once the cause of his breach with Charles, and he watched her as he spoke, trying to read the purpose in her set face and grave, wide eyes.

"Well, my girl," he asked, when he had made an end of it, "did you hope that you might be a queen of England?"

Jane shook her head. "I never hoped that," she answered, "I never dreamed it. It was when Charles"—she paused for a moment, and then went on—"it was when His Majesty seemed to have as little chance of the crown of England as I have of being England's queen, that I listened to his words. Rather, I should say," she added, after a moment's silence, while Monk still watched her steadfastly, "that I listened to the words of Will Jackson."

Monk nodded his head thoughtfully. Then he spoke slowly. "Will Jackson was a man of yesterday. To-day he is called Charles Stuart. To-morrow he might, if he were wise, be styled Charles the Second. You must say good-bye to Will Jackson, you must say good-bye to Charles Stuart, you must say good-bye to Charles the Second."



The girl faced his keen scrutiny with a look of composed sadness. "I know that," she said. "But the trouble is that Will Jackson does not know it, and that Charles Stuart will not know it."

Monk frowned. "The young man," he said, "is indeed obstinate. He seems to set the colour in a girl's face and the light in a girl's eyes above the throne of his ancestors. He swears that he would rather have you and be penniless and exiled, than lose you and be King and fill his pockets."

"I know that," Jane answered pensively, "and I truly believe that he means it."

"He means it for the moment," Monk qualified gruffly. "He would not mean it a month hence, a year hence, when you and he are drifting about the world together, a pair of beggars. He might tire of you. I do not say he would," Monk added a little more gently, as he saw the girl's face flame, "but he might. Men do tire of women sometimes, I am told, and from what I have heard of the young man, I should not think that abiding fidelity was his characteristic virtue."

He halted for an instant, as if to afford Jane the chance to speak if so she wished, but she was silent, and he continued.

"Even if he did not tire of you, there would inevitably come a time when he would wish again to be King, wish he had caught at his lost crown when it was within reach of his fingers, the crown that will never again be within their reach. For understand, young woman," and Monk slapped the table emphatically with his open palm, "that this chance which I give Charles Stuart will never come again. It is a rare and unexpected chance. It is the last chance."

Jane sighed. "No doubt of that," she murmured wearily, "no doubt of that."

"No doubt," Monk echoed. "It is certain. Only I can make Charles Stuart King, and if I leave Breda without his submission in this matter in return for my submission in so many matters, he may go whistle for his kingdom." He reflected for an instant, and then resumed. "I suppose His Majesty"—he emphasized the words as he used them, as if in the intent to emphasize the space between the girl before him and the King that might be—"I suppose His Majesty understands you when he swears that there is no left-handed compromise to be effected in this matter."

He looked eagerly at Jane as he spoke, hoping to read some sign of readiness to compromise, and finding none. Jane reddened and paled, but she showed no anger at Monk's hint.

"His Majesty understands me," she stated gravely, "and you, too, you understand me, General Monk."

Monk made an impatient gesture. It would have saved so much trouble if Jane had proved pliant, that for all his Puritanism, he found himself vexed with her for not admitting herself condemnable. But he was clear-sensed enough to see that the girl was earnest in her virtue, and to refrain from vain pressure. "In that case," he questioned fretfully, "what is to be done? Can you persuade the King to take a more sensible view of life, and to remember that a love-affair is not the be-all and the end-all of a King's existence?"

"His Majesty," Jane answered gravely, "is of an obstinate disposition, and when he has made his mind up on a matter, it is a hard task to persuade him to unmake it."

"Are you willing to make the essay?" Monk asked, scanning the girl narrowly. "You must surely understand that, if you love him, you should do this thing; you should, with your woman's wit and your woman's wiles, prevail upon him to appreciate his folly."

Again Jane's cheeks flamed and again Monk paused and sought to soften the harsh effect of his words.

"His folly as a King, I mean," he explained. "If he were a free man, a soldier of fortune, a workaday English gentleman, I might think him wise enough. But he is not a free man, he must cease to be a soldier of fortune, and he cannot command the peaceful lot of a workaday English gentleman. It is not only his own interests, wishes, desires, advantages that he must consider, and that you, madam, must consider. He must weigh the welfare of a great country and of a whole people. I firmly believe that in our present time of trouble, the Restoration of His Majesty will have a wonderful effect in giving peace and harmony to our distracted Commonwealth. If I believed that my Protectorate would work as well, why, it is but in nature that I should snatch at it. But I am not sure of my Protectorate, and I can make the Restoration safe. Will you help to this desirable end, Mistress Lane?"

Jane looked fixedly at her questioner. She liked the sincerity, the strength of the man that held the King's fate and her fate in his hands. "I would help if I could," she answered slowly.

Monk allowed himself the shadow of a smile. "You can refuse to marry the young man," he suggested dryly.

Jane shook her head. "The King," she said, "is not to be hoodwinked so easily. He would know well enough that I was refusing for his sake, and my refusal would

make him only the more steadfast in his resolve. It may be madness in him, but it is not only vanity in me if I feel very sure that he would not accept the crown you offer, the crown he covets, the crown he has the right to wear, on such a condition."

Monk, who had listened to her with manifest impatience, now drummed impatiently upon the table.

"What is to be done," he asked angrily, "what is to be done? It is incredible that a great turn of state should be jeopardized by a hiccougging love-sickness." He looked at Jane with a sudden ferocity and continued in a voice that was half threatening, half cajoling in its medley of command and appeal. "You can do something," he said, "you must be able to do something. You are a woman, and women are proverbially cunning. Use your wit, and make this headstrong young gentleman do what we would have him do, do what I hope you would have him do, do what he must do if he would, in your Cavalier phrase, enjoy his own again."

Jane had clasped her fingers tightly together, as if she were trying to pray. Confused thoughts troubled her brain, and she heard the words of Monk dimly, like words whispered through a mist. "I am at a loss," she protested, and said no more.

Monk raged flagrantly. He found it hard to believe such unbelievable folly. "There is no time to lose," he said furiously. "I am not going to dawdle here, waiting on an amorous adventurer's pleasure. It is hit or miss with him. I stay here no longer than to-day."

While the General was fuming and erupting, conquered out of his natural or acquired calm by his untoward irritation, Jane scarcely heeded him; Jane was thinking hard, thinking of her lover, thinking of herself.

She had but to keep still, to do nothing, and she would be the wife of the man she loved, and, so being, gain such happiness as is granted to mortality. If she acted as Monk would have her act, she would ruin her own life, but she would very surely give back his kingdom to her King. It says much for her womanhood that she lingered in her decision; it says much for her loyalty that if she lingered she had never any doubt what her decision must be. Already she saw a way, and shuddered at its ugliness. But the path of renunciation is not carried through orchards and pleasure-gardens, but through the desert spaces and the valleys of angry rocks.

Jane came a little nearer to General Monk, and addressed him in a low voice, looking very fixedly into his angry eyes.

"General," she said simply, "if I do this thing that you ask for his sake, if I hurt him for his sake, that I may help him to his own, and if in helping him, I break my own heart, and lose my life's happiness, you must promise me one thing."

Monk began to feel that he was gaining ground, and he rejoiced, but he was wary and showed no sign of rejoicing. "What is that?" he questioned cautiously.

Jane answered him in a cold, monotonous voice. "If," she said, "I can persuade Charles that I am faithless, that I am worthless, that I deceived him for the sake of what it might be in his power to give me, if I make it plain that I gave my love to another, while I pretended to hold myself fair for him, why then I am very sure that he will do as you wish. But if I do all this for him and for you, I must ask a reward."

Monk raised his eyebrows in honest astonishment. Was he, after all, mistaken in this calm, earnest, beautiful

woman. Was she only one more camp-follower on the army of adventurers? "A reward!" he asked, in a voice that made no attempt to conceal the speaker's amazement.

"Yes," Jane answered deliberately, "a reward. Hear the terms of it. I am willing to let my lover think this ill of me, so long as the thinking brings him to his kingdom. But when he has come to his own, I wish to stand clean in his thoughts again. You must promise me, therefore, as you are a soldier and a man of honour, that when Charles is safe on his throne, and the time comes when it will be safe for you to speak, you will tell him how I deceived him."

Monk sat in thoughtful silence for a few seconds, watching the girl. His mind was relieved. She was what he had believed her to be, and he had it in his heart to feel sorry for her. Jane went on:

"When he is King there will be no way for him to go back; fate will have made it impossible for him to seek me in marriage. I shall have done the work you wanted. I shall have served the King and England. Surely it is not much to ask in return that you should set me right with the man who was my lover, with the man whom I have loved so long, with the man whom I shall always love?"

Monk advanced towards Jane, and, stretching out his hand, took her hand in a firm grasp. "I promise," he said simply.

Jane looked into his face and found confidence there. "I know that you will keep your word," she said.

## CHAPTER XXXIV

### JANE'S RESOLVE

**T**HOSE that have laid their living hearts as a sacrifice upon the altar of Love, are seldom in a mood to feel surprise at any mundane oddity. Yet Jane, though she passed from her fateful interview with Monk, hugging the cruel knowledge to her heart that the best of her life was ended, was compelled to recognize that the spirit of comedy will assert itself and antic and caper in the face of the gravest tragedy. Even as she passed out of Master Yeoman's abode, a coach came to a halt at the door, and forth from that coach emerged a woman and a man, whom, though they were both habited like Dutch peasants she recognized to her astonishment as her brother John, and her friend Willemyn.

Willemyn, as she found herself face to face with Jane, broke the silence she had maintained so steadfastly during her drive with her rescuer by giving a little scream. Then, without pausing to greet her friend, or give any word of explanation as to her present eccentric trim, she darted past Jane Lane and vanished, a whirlwind of skirts and a blaze of blushes, into her father's house. John Lane and Jane Lane stood on the threshold and stared at each other in amazement.

Even in her misery Jane was too much herself to refrain from smiling at the sight of her dear brother in this unfamiliar trim, and John, who had no conceit as to the kind of figure he cut, answered her smile with a hearty

laugh. Jane welcomed the encounter and its attendant mirth, for it compelled her, being no longer alone, to carry herself with all the courage she could command, and wear, if not a cheerful, at least an easy face. John, who knew nothing of the events that had taken place during his romantico-comic expedition, felt no great surprise at seeing his sister issue from the house of Master Peter. She might very well have gone there to visit Willemyn, in ignorance of that wayward maiden's caprice. It was, therefore, plain to him that Jane's very natural amazement at seeing the pair thus translated called for immediate satisfaction.

"Are you bewildered to find me in this rig?" he asked, and as Jane nodded he continued, "Let me drive you home, for I have no great fancy to walk the streets in this attire, and I will tell you how it chanced."

The brother and sister entered the coach. It was no great driving distance between the house of Master Peter and the place where the Lanes lodged, but it afforded time enough for John to tell his sister something of his absurd adventure. He could not, even to Jane, relate little Willemyn's audacious confession, but he recounted how the girl had wheedled him into taking a walk, and how Willemyn, standing by the canal bank, had overreached herself, and had fallen into the water. Jane listened with an air of amused attention, but, indeed, her thoughts were not much with the matter. She was thinking of herself, of the task she had set herself to do, of the part she had promised to perform. She was shaping a scheme in her brain, while Colonel Lane told his tale, and by the time that they reached home she had made up her mind.



When Colonel Lane, a little later, having shifted his whimsical attire for a more familiar habit, entered the living-room of their lodging, he found his sister waiting for him, and he knew by the gravity of her countenance that she had serious words to say. He sat by her side and Jane, holding his hand, told him of all that had happened since they parted, of the breach between Monk, and the King, of the King's visit to her and his entreaties, of her visit to Monk, and what she learned thereat, and of her resolve to do all that was possible to meet Monk's wishes. Then she told him of the plan she had formed to bring the desired end about, and asked his aid — she knew there was no need to ask his approval in the matter.

Colonel Lane heard her to the end without interruption, and when she had finished he pressed her hand.

"My dear sister," he said, "you have acted like yourself, which is no more than to say that you have acted rightly and wisely, and nobly. I am all yours to bring this unhappy business to the issue you propose."

He embraced her, and then quitted her, obeying her desire that he should at once seek out Master Challis, and bring him to her presence. He had the good fortune to find the secretary at his lodging, and with a very affable seeming, delivered his message that Mistress Jane Lane requested speech with him.

If the message caused Challis any surprise or any pleasure, or any uneasiness, he showed no sign of emotion on his composed countenance. Contenting himself with assuring his visitor politely that nothing would afford him greater satisfaction than to wait on Mistress Lane instantly, he took up his hat and cloak, and was ready to

set out. The two men returned, conversing amicably on this and that, to the Lanes' lodging. There Colonel Lane ushered the secretary into Jane's presence and retired to another room, leaving Jane and Challis alone.

## CHAPTER XXXV

### CHALLIS HAS A PART TO PLAY

CHALLIS stood opposite Jane with his habitual air of tranquil and respectful admiration. As was his wont, his eyes were as unquestioning as his lips, yet he was wondering greatly why Jane had sent for him. He knew nothing of the occurrences of the morning. Since Jane Lane had come to Breda, Charles had found little employment for Challis, and the good secretary passed, or professed to pass, his time at his lodging. His idle hours, as he informed the courtiers, were employed upon a history of the reign of His Majesty King Charles the Second, information which came in due course to the ears of that monarch *in partibus*, and touched him mightily. Yet the pen of the historian was never so exacting that it did not allow Master Challis leisure for other ways of passing time. Now, as he stood before Jane Lane, he was ignorant of the coming of Monk, of the conference and its catastrophe. When he greeted Colonel Lane a while ago, he had expressed with polite indifference a hope that Colonel Lane's travels had been satisfactory, and Colonel Lane had assured him no less politely that they had proved so.

Jane, as she faced Challis, showed as imperturbable as her guest. She bade him be seated, and when he had followed her lead, she addressed him.

"Master Challis," she began, "I have summoned you

on a matter of some moment to His Majesty, to myself, and to you."

She put him last deliberately. Challis took advantage of the allocation to be suave.

"Whatever is of moment to His Majesty and to you," he said earnestly, "must needs be of moment to me."

Jane could scarcely deny a kind of admiration to the persistent mask, but she was resolved to see it fall.

"Master Challis," she said bluntly, "I have read your letter to Barstow."

Challis's smooth face was untroubled; Challis's smooth manner was unmoved.

"I have written many letters to Master Barstow," he answered, with a calm that was magnificent. "Which of them have you done me the honour of perusing?"

"The letter," Jane replied, "in which you tell him that His Majesty is privy to the assassination of General Monk."

Challis kept a cool head, though his pulses were drumming and he felt suddenly sick.

"I do not take your meaning, dear lady," he said, and his voice was excellently steady. "How could I write such nonsense, knowing it to be nonsense?"

There was a drawer in the table at the end, where Jane was sitting. Jane pulled it open, and drew from it a paper.

"Here," she said quietly, "is a cipher written by you and enclosed in a letter to Master Barstow." She produced another paper. "And here," she continued, "is a translation of that cipher into workaday English, in which you tell your fellow-traitor that the King consents to the murder of General Monk."

Even habitual, well-trained self-possession may fail be-

fore unexpected ruin. Challis rose from his seat, and made a movement across the table, as if to snatch the papers from Jane's grasp. Jane drew back a little, and laughed at him.

"You forget," she said, "that my brother is within call. But indeed," she added, as Challis dropped back into his seat, "there would be no need to summon him."

From the drawer which had yielded the papers she produced a pistol, which she showed him for a moment, before she returned it to its hiding-place.

"I am a creditable shot," she assured him, "and cherish little pity for the King's enemies. But these poor papers, which you are so hot to snatch, are no more than copies. The originals are in a safe place."

Challis stared at her with a ghastly face. He knew what a charge of spying meant in the King's fellowship. He remembered the fate of Manning, quietly done to death in the wood beyond Cologne, and he loved to live. Though he guessed that his face betrayed him, he made a desperate effort to save his game.

"Indeed, Mistress Lane," he protested, "I fail to understand you. I never wrote such a letter as you speak of, and a guess-work charge will not discredit me with a conscientious King."

Jane did not respond directly to Challis's defence. Instead of this, she told him a piece of news.

"General Monk," she said, with the voice of one that tells the most natural tale in the world, "is at this moment in Breda on a visit to His Majesty."

Challis gaped at her. In a few short seconds the world, as he knew it, seemed to have fallen in pieces around him. "General Monk in Breda?" he gasped. "Impossible."

"You say so," Jane commented, "because you are

thinking that if the thing were true, you would have been told of it by your friend Barstow. But your friend Barstow knows no more of the General's presence here than you did till I told you. It was my brother who visited England secretly and persuaded the General to accompany him here and have audience with the King."

Challis, in his heart, knew Jane too well to entertain any real doubt of the truth of her miraculous assertion. If she said that General Monk was in Breda, and had seen the King, then very surely General Monk was in Breda and General Monk had seen the King. Challis felt that he was slipping into the abyss. If Monk came to terms with Charles, Monk, so Challis argued, arguing from himself, would no doubt willingly deliver up the name of the spy in the King's camp. He had been so sure that he would never be detected, that now detection dumbfounded him. He glared at Jane with a haggard face that few would have recognized for the bland, disdainful countenance of Master Secretary. "What do you mean to do?" he gasped, and shuddered at the sound of his voice.

"If General Monk had not visited Breda," Jane answered calmly, "my duty to His Majesty would have commanded me to lay these papers before him. Do you remember Manning?"

Did he remember Manning? Had he thought of anything else in the last few terrible seconds? Manning and the lonely woods, and the two Kingsmen that pistolled him.

"Surely, for the sake of our old friendship—" he began to plead, in a voice so broken and abject that it scarcely seemed his own. Jane interrupted him contemptuously.

old friendship undeceived me long ago. But if you were my dearest friend, if you were of my blood and kin, I would not spare you if I found you playing the traitor to the King."

Challis made a desperate effort to recover his self-possession and to speak like a brave man. "What do you mean to do?" he asked again.

"Since General Monk has come to Breda," Jane answered, "my duty towards His Majesty has changed its nature, and I may decide to give you back your papers and to save your life, if indeed, you care to save it."

It needed but the merest glance at Challis's face, racked with terror and now illuminated with a glame of desperate hope, to assure her that he considered his life well worth saving.

"What do you mean to do?" he asked again for the third time, and moistened his lips nervously.

Jane leaned her elbows on the table, and propped her face in the cup of her palms.

"I have a service to command of you," she said, "or, if you prefer it so, I have a favour to ask. If you do me this service, if you grant me this favour, why, I will destroy your paper, keep your secret, and let you go free."

The unfamiliar flush that ruddled the pale cheeks of Challis betrayed the greatness of his fear and the eagerness of his hope. "Tell me what you want me to do," he said, stumbling over his words in his heat to speak quickly, "and I will do it, if it be at all possible for me to do in honour."

Jane could scarcely forbear from laughing in his face, to catch that word on his lips.

"I shall do nothing to endanger your precious honour, Master Challis," she promised scornfully. "What I ask of you is as easy as lying; is, in fact, lying, but I shall be your accomplice in the lie. I want you to come with me to the King, and to bear me out when I tell His Majesty that you and I are plighted in marriage."

Challis gaped at the girl, and drew a long, astonished breath and he clenched his nerveless fingers tightly together, while the ghastly pallor of his cheeks shifted to a furious red. "I do not understand you," he whispered hoarsely.

"There is no need for you to understand me," Jane said coldly, "and no need for me to explain my meaning. I have told you what I want you to do and the price I am prepared to pay for your obedience. Are you ready to obey?"

Challis moistened his dry lips again, and unclenched his fingers. "I am ready to obey," he said dully.

"That is well," Jane answered. "Will you have the goodness to seek His Majesty, and tell him that I entreat his presence here? He should have returned from the tennis court by now. You will say nothing more than my message, Master Challis. You will be wise not to play me false in any way, for I still have your paper, and Manning is an ugly example."

"I shall do your bidding," Challis answered, and rose to his feet. His head swam; his gait was unsteady. He that had believed himself nerved against all emergencies was staggered out of his manhood, first by the discovery of his treason, and next by the paradoxical punishment accorded to it. As he moved with faltering steps towards the door, Jane again addressed him.

"You will follow the King into this room immedi-



to say."

Challis inclined his head. He seemed to have no voice left to reply. He passed out of the room upon his bewildering mission. He descended the stairs like a man in a dream, but, as he descended, he gradually woke up. It seemed certain that his life was safe; it seemed certain that, for whatever reason, Jane was not for the King. And if Jane were not for the King—? Wild thoughts twisted wild lines on his face. The possibilities they suggested restored his equanimity more briskly than wine, and it was with all his usual seeming that he entered the royal apartment.

He found the King there, with Dawlish and Garlinge, the three newly returned from the tennis court. Dawlish had won and was jubilant; Garlinge was sulky; Charles seemed irritable. But his irritation vanished when Challis, signalling him aside, communicated his message. In a moment Charles had quitted the room and was climbing the stairs with the light-hearted agility of a schoolboy. In another moment Challis was at his heels.

## CHAPTER XXXVI

### THE SACRIFICE

**C**HARLES rushed into Jane's room with eager face and outstretched hands. But he came to a sudden halt as he saw the set stern face of the girl he loved and her rigid attitude of restraint. She had no smile to answer his smile; she did not move a step to meet him or give him any sign of greeting.

"Jane, love," Charles cried. "You sent for me. What has happened that you carry yourself thus?"

Even as he spoke, he heard the sound of the door closing behind him, and he turned to find, to his surprise and rage, that Challis had entered the room and was standing motionless, with an air of respectful commiseration on his face.

"What is the meaning of this, sir?" Charles said, fiercely. "I did not command you to attend me. Withdraw."

Jane interposed. "I must ask your Majesty," she said in a steady voice, "to suffer Master Challis to remain, for what I have to say concerns him as well as me."

Charles looked amazed from the woman to the man, and from the man to the woman. "What is the meaning of this?" he asked.

"It means, Sire," Jane answered with admirable composure, "that it is my humble duty to inform your

man."

Charles stared at her as he might have stared at one that suddenly went mad. "If this is a jest—" he began, and could not finish his sentence. He caught at the collar of his jerkin as if to give himself air.

"It is no jest," Jane answered firmly. "I am pledged in marriage to Master Challis."

"Do you love him?" Charles asked thickly. There was sweat upon his forehead; his face was congested; he looked as if he might have a stroke. Jane's heart was like a stone in her frozen body, but she answered bravely. "I love him, I have loved him for many years."

"Then why, in God's name," cried the unhappy King, heedless of the presence of his rival, "did you let me think that you loved me?"

"Forgive me, Sire," Jane pleaded, with bowed head and extended hands of entreaty, "I hoped to be Queen of England. But you cannot make me that now, and so I must needs follow the calling of my heart."

Charles groaned like a wounded beast. "You jade!" he shrieked at her. Then he turned furiously upon Challis. "I should like to kill you," he cried.

Challis faced his fury, as composedly respectful as of old. "Indeed, Sire," he said, "I had no knowledge of Mistress Lane's commerce with you. But this dear lady and I have long been lovers, long pledged to wed."

Therewith he advanced towards Jane and took his stand by her side. He revelled in his triumph, resolute to enjoy it to the full. "It was for me she came to Breda. I will defend my dearest against the world."

Even as he spoke, he flung his arms about her and drew her to his breast, and pressed his lips on hers in a

passionate kiss. Jane did not struggle, did not resist. She lay like a dead woman in the secretary's arms. Charles made a movement as if he would fling himself upon the pair and tear them apart; then with a desperate effort of restraint he conquered his madness.

"Mistress Lane," he said contemptuously, "you should be a player-woman, for your gifts and your virtues belong to the play-house. You have bravely deceived me, but I have enough native wit to applaud the comedy." He turned to Challis. "You are no longer in my service," he said. Then, with one more mocking, disdainful glance at Jane, he left the room, and, in another moment, was stumbling headlong down the stairs. At the foot he fell into the arms of General Monk, who was waiting for him. "All women are devils, General," Charles said. "I am your humble servant to command."

## CHAPTER XXXVII

### FAREWELL

THE moment that Charles had gone, Jane swung herself free from Challis's clasp so quickly that he was unable to prevent her.

"You have played your part well," she said bitterly, "and you shall be paid the price of your services."

She went to her cabinet and, from a secret place, drew out the cipher-paper that Challis had written. She showed it to Challis, who bowed his head in sign of recognition, for, at the moment, he was too excited to trust himself to speak. Then she held the treasonable paper to the flame of the taper that was burning on the standish, and held it there till it was consumed to ashes. She did the same with the copy that she had made. Then she turned to the observant secretary. "You can go now," she said, "and I hope that I may never see you again."

Challis moved towards the door. But when he got there, and his hand was upon the latch, he paused and turned, and stepped a few paces back in the direction of the spot where Jane stood. There was a most unusual embarrassment in his face, in his manner, in the effort which he seemed to make to find the words he wished to say.

"Mistress Lane," he began, "you and I have played for your pleasure cruel parts to-day. You have declared



before witness that you loved me, and I knew that you lied. I showed my belief in your love, and I bolstered your lie with my lie. Is it not possible for us two, we lost ones, to make those lies a reality?"

To Jane, as she listened, the many years waned and withered, and she was again at Bentley, and listening to the voice of young Master Challis, and finding it marvellous sweet. She answered him coldly, and yet there was pity, there was appreciation in the coldness of her tone.

"Master Challis," she said, "you have committed the unpardonable sin. If you had been my brother — God forgive me for mixing such a thought in my mind with the name of my brother — I should have hated you with no less a hate."

Challis sighed an honest sigh. For the moment, his mask of passive disdain had fallen from him, and he was just his human self.

"What I did, Jane," he said simply, "I did because I loved you. I loved you the first moment that I saw you. I shall love you always with the best love that is in me. Because I knew that you loved Charles Stuart, I hated Charles Stuart; because I knew that you repulsed me and denied me because of some fancied dedication to the salvation of Charles Stuart, I dedicated myself to his destruction. What do I care for the brawls of Puritans and Cavaliers? I would fling them both to Gehenna to win your love. Even at this moment I regret nothing that I have done, since what I have done has given me, if only for an instant, the power to kiss your lips, as I have yearned, through all these years, to kiss them, as I kissed them once long ago."

There was a direct credibility in his speech which touched Jane's intelligence, if it left her heart untouched. For a second the degraded traitor had sloughed the baser part, and was again the brilliant gentleman, shining scholar, and charming suitor, that had once appealed to her fancy.

"God is responsible for us," she said, "and God judges our sins. It is not for me to judge you, but I wish you to go."

Challis went.

. . . . .

A few days later Jane leaned from the window that looked upon the canal, and watched, in the street below, Master Peter Yeoman's great gilt coach draw up at the door. The Burgomaster descended therefrom in his robes of state and chain of office, and entered the house. In a very few minutes he came forth again, accompanying Charles, with his little cloud of courtiers about him. It was no sober cloud that now environed majesty: not rainbow nor peacock was gayer than the garments of these rehabilitated gentlemen. In their midst moved Charles, the gayest and the most glorious of them all. Jane could hear his merry laughter float up to stab her heart. She knew that this was the beginning of his journey to England, and she knew that, but for her, this beginning would never have been.

Charles entered the coach attended by the Burgomaster, and the lords Ettington and Garlinge. The other courtiers climbed into following coaches, and the little procession began to move. Jane could see that Charles's head was turned in pleasant talk towards Master Yeoman, and he did not cast one glance towards the house

where he had known a love that was nobler than he guessed. As the great gilt coach disappeared from the watching woman's sight, Jane dropped in a heap on the floor, and cried like a tired child.



## EPILOGUE

ONE spring morning, two years after that day in Breda when Charles had driven away in Peter Yeoman's gilt coach to be King of England, without a backward look to the window of the woman who had refused to be his wife, Jane Lane was busy in the rose-garden of her brother's house at Bentley. The sun shone on her, caressing her dark curls and shining on the brave eyes that looked out upon the world as frankly as of old, but that now had an unfamiliar melancholy in their depths. Jane Lane had never forgotten Will Jackson, but it seemed to her that Will Jackson had very completely forgotten Jane Lane.

Jane Lane was busy gathering roses. Near by her stood Willemyn, prettier than ever, and prouder than she had ever dreamed of being, for did she not hold in her arms the small Charles John Lane, son and heir to her Colonel Lane, for whom she had courted a watery death? If Jane Lane was dreaming of Will Jackson, Willemyn was certainly thinking of John Lane, for, indeed, she thought of little else, ever, than of him and of little Charles John. She loved to recall with mingled pride and amusement, the day when the colonel paid her a formal visit, and laid his heart at her feet with something of the manner of one that peremptorily summons a fortress to surrender. She recalled the calm assurance with which he told her that he had had enough of folly, that he expected her to behave like a good and

sensible girl in the future. So, for a while, did the worthy colonel lecture the spoilt idol of Breda as if she had been a naughty schoolgirl and Willemyn listen in delighted dejection, only to be all delight when the colonel, having ended his pompous homily with an honest laugh, had caught her in his arms, and given her the first kisses that she had ever cared to taste.

She could always smile tenderly at the thought of this astonishing wooing; she could always laugh when she recalled the fury of her disappointed suitors. Did they not league themselves together, and send a Round Robin of mortal challenge to the colonel? Did not the colonel summon them to a meeting at the "Long Leopard," and there make a jocular speech in which he began by expressing his willingness to meet them collectively, but not singly, in battle? Did he not then suddenly cease to be merry, and address them in terms so manly and straightforward, that he captured all their outraged hearts, and made them his friends again, and cemented the renewed friendship at a noble banquet?

Breda seemed a long way off to Willemyn; Breda and Gascoyne, and East, and Van Poop, and Goupillot, adventurers on impossible enterprises. Even her father's house and her father seemed dim and distant, in this beautiful English garden where she dandled John Lane's child. But she knew that her father intended, on the expiration of his burgomastership, to settle down in England, and she waited on his coming with content.

Willemyn kept up a gentle stream of talk, to which Jane made little assenting noises without devoting too much attention to what was being said. She knew now, well enough, that most of her pretty sister-in-law's discourses began with some such phrase as, "John says

that," or, "John is of opinion that," and that her mental attitude towards her John was that of the priestess expounding the dicta of the Delphic Oracle. "Well, I must go in," Willemyn had said at last. "Baby must have his nap, and John will be expecting me."

Jane nodded with a smile, and watched her sister-in-law trip away. She was very fond of Willemyn, and she knew that John and his wife were very happy together, but she was not sorry just now to be alone, and to be free to think her own thoughts. It was only the day before that they had heard the news that the King had been married by proxy to the princess Catherine of Braganza in Portugal, and that the royal bride would very shortly arrive in England. Jane was honestly glad. She prayed earnestly that her King might be happy in his married state, that his wife might change something of the life of which Jane had heard unwillingly, that she would be to him a companion, a friend and a lover. But, all the same, Jane's heart felt as if it were not far from breaking. She knew that she could have been all these to Will Jackson, and she knew that Will Jackson could have been all these to her, and yet she was standing here alone in the rose-garden, and Will Jackson was marrying a stranger.

She stood in the full sunlight musing, and the odour of the roses that she carried mingled with her thoughts and strove to sweeten their melancholy. The little gate of the rose-garden clicked again and clanged to. Jane, sunk in her memories, did not heed, did not turn, until the sound of steps coming over the grass stopped abruptly, quite close to her. Then she looked round and beheld a wonder. A couple of yards away from her stood Charles, the King. Not Charles as she had

seen him last, two years ago, with contempt and agony looking at her from his dark eyes, but Charles with the love and the longing in his face that had filled her heart with rapture during the haunted days at Breda. She stood still for an instant, and then he extended his arms towards her, and, with a little cry of joy, she flung herself forward, and was folded in a close embrace. The next minute she had burst into a passion of tears.

"Jane, I have never seen you cry before," were the King's first words to her, said in a voice that shook a little. Jane lifted up her face, wet with tears and radiant with joy, and looked long at him.

"Charles, Charles, is it really you? I have dreamed so often that you have come to me, that now I can hardly believe it is really happening. You no longer hate me? Do you know why I did it?"

Charles looked sadly at her.

"Beloved, I know everything. Monk told me the day after my proxy married the Princess of Portugal. Jane, you are the most splendid woman I know, but I think you did me a bad turn on that day. When you shattered my faith in you, I seemed to have lost my hold on everything good. I despised women, I hated men; and I have found no one since to break my disillusion."

Jane stood on tip-toe and kissed his cheek timidly. At the touch his blood fired. He caught her roughly to him, and kissed her passionately on the lips.

"Jane, Jane," he stammered. "Why did you give me up? We might have won through. Who could see you and not want you for their queen? We should have been so happy."

Jane looked at him wistfully.

"Do not deceive yourself, Charles," she said. "I should never have been accepted, and I think I should have died under the weight of the sacrifice you wished to make for me. As it is, you marry a rich princess; she is good, gentle and loving: she will give you children, royal on both sides, fit heirs to your Throne."

Charles looked sadly at her.

"I do not think the Stuart blood would be any the worse for an alloy of a less royal kind. I can picture a sturdy little Charles with your eyes, Jane; a graceful little Jane with, perhaps, a look of me."

"Well, let us imagine these dream-children," she answered, bravely meeting his gaze. "I can see them growing up, neither commoner nor royal, too proud for this, yet too poor to refuse it; too humble for that, yet proud enough to expect it. And I can see our sturdy little Charles growing up into a man, and, looking with reproachful eyes at us, as if to say: 'Where is my birth-right that you threw away for your own selfish joys?' I can see him the centre of a crowd of adventurers, and discontented plotters, his life a life of baulked intrigues and discontented hopes. I can see the little Jane, all hope of an ordinary happy marriage denied her, ending her days in a convent, a flower without fruit, a promise unfulfilled. Ah no, beloved, it is best as it is. I have prayed so hard for your happiness. And I pray for the Queen. May God bless her!" she flung herself on her knees before him and kissed his hand passionately. "And I pray for the King!" she said, looking up at him with beaming eyes.

Charles quickly raised her. "Perhaps you are right, child," he said. "I do not think so, but perhaps you

## A HEALTH UNTO HIS MAJESTY

are. Must one order one's life for the good of future generations? Have we no right to our own happiness? Do you count nothing? Do I count nothing?"

"You count everything, Charles," she answered quickly. "There is only one man in the world for me. I love you, I have always loved you, and I shall always love you. Remember that, if the thought can ever comfort you. My love for you is so great that I feel as if I could wrap you round in it like a cloud, to keep off all evil. Whatever you do, whatever is said of you, I shall know what the real Charles is, the man I love, who is worthy of love."

"Jane, you speak as if we should not meet again?" Charles said quickly. "You do not mean that, do you?"

"It is better not," she answered sadly. "Things can never become better for us, and if we often meet, they might become . . . worse. But send me word sometimes that you are well and happy." . . .

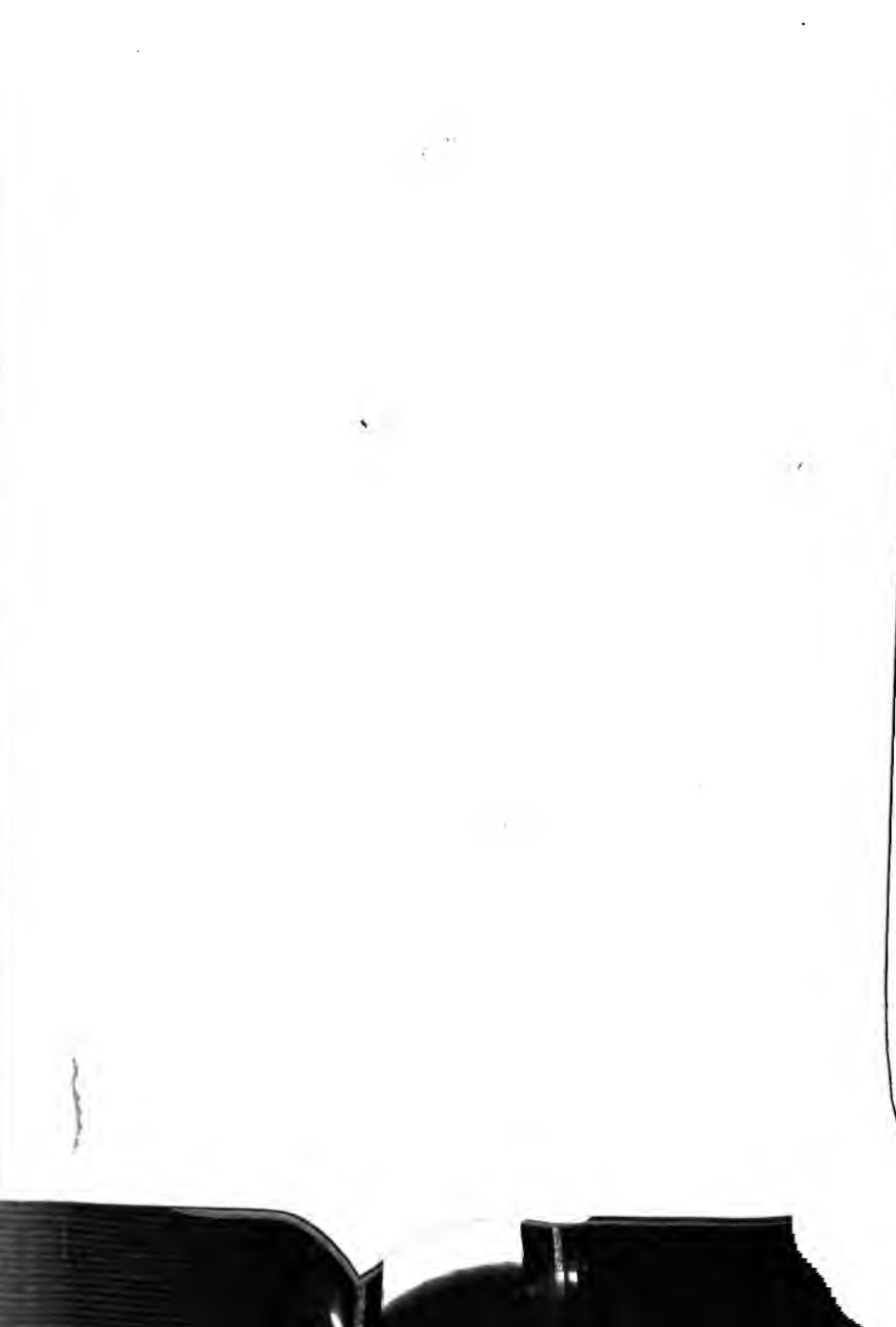
A few instants later Charles took farewell of Colonel Lane and his wife, at whose house of Bentley he had drawn rein for a halt on his journey to meet his bride.

THE END











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